

HISTORY
OF THE
CATHOLIC
CHURCH

MOURRET-
THOMPSON

VOLUME
THREE

B. HERDER

A HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

BY
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A HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

VOLUME III

I. THE PAPACY

II. THE CHURCH AMONG THE BARBARIANS

III. THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

Introduction

THE period of history extending from the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 to the taking of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 is called the Middle Ages, to designate the transition from ancient to modern times. This important period has been in turn the object of excessive contempt, unmitigated abuse, and exuberant praise.

The Renaissance scholars were chiefly literary men, who looked upon those ten centuries, when Latin was spoken so incorrectly, merely as an epoch of gross ignorance. To their eyes it was a thousand years of darkness between two eras of light: the era of pagan antiquity, in which they considered only the golden age of its literature, and that of the Renaissance of antiquity, which they heralded with enthusiastic hopes.¹

The eighteenth century passed from an attitude of contempt to one of hatred. The Encyclopedists regarded the Middle Ages as beginning with the burning of the Alexandrian Library, a destruction of mankind's intellectual heritage, and as ending with the pyres of the Inquisition, which, they said, burned alive the men who had been laboring to rebuild that heritage. These philosophers considered the Middle Ages as the accursed period of ecclesiastical tyranny, of ignorance, and of unalloyed barbarism.

¹ The expression "Middle Ages" seems to have been taken by history from the philology of the humanists. The language studied by Du Cange in his *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis* is precisely that of the period extending from the fifth to the sixteenth century. The earliest history of the Middle Ages is one by the German, Christopher Keller (Cellarius), *Historia medii aevi*, 1688. The expression "Middle Ages," used in passing by Voltaire, did not become current until the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Romanticists made it fashionable. Cf. Kurth, *Qui est-ce que le Moyen Age?*

The studies of national history, fostered by German patriotism at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, produced Romanticism and with it the cult of the Middle Ages. Starting in Germany with the work of Wackenroder, Romanticism spread in England with Walter Scott and in France with Chateaubriand. Thereafter everyone thought and spoke about Gothic cathedrals, armored knights, and elegantly dressed ladies. Even the most unconventional "children of the age" were haunted by visions of monks and knights. "How charming it is to behold, at a feudal baron's threshold, near an austere monastery, the white cross and the holy water font," wrote Alfred de Musset in 1828.

The strict methods of historical criticism developed in the French Ecole des Chartes and the German universities in the course of the nineteenth century and thence adopted by the scholarly world, gradually led historians to a juster view of medieval times. Today eminent scholars consider the Middle Ages "one of the most fruitful periods of history, a period in which the nations of the new Europe were formed, in which we see the creation of a civilization very different from the Graeco-Roman civilization, but in certain aspects not inferior to it." ²

To be more explicit, we may say that historical science, better informed than that of the Humanists, less prejudiced than that of the Encyclopedists, and more profound than that of the Romanticists, in our day regards the period from the fifth to the fourteenth century as an epoch of most intense intellectual and political activity. That activity, under the direction of the Roman Church, resulted in the formation of modern Europe and its deep penetration by the Catholic spirit.

The deciphering of numerous early documents and the pub-

² Lavissee and Rambaud, *Histoire générale*, I, 1. Auguste Comte regards the Middle Ages as "the epoch when the world was best organized," as "the Roman Empire reviving spiritually." Cf. Faguet, *Politicians and Moralists of the Nineteenth Century*, 2d series; Brunetière, *Les chemins de la croyance: l'utilisation du positivisme*.

lication of a great number of monographs have enabled us to visualize this prodigious development of intellectual activity which fills the Middle Ages. We are better informed than we were before about the monastic, episcopal, and palace schools which Charlemagne's activity established. We possess more documents concerning those ninth century disputes in which such men as John Scotus Erigena and Hincmar of Reims were renowned. We are better informed with regard to the vast labors of Peter Lombard and that center of learning, mysticism, and poetry—the Abbey of St. Victor. We can now picture the Paris University of the thirteenth century, with its large number of young students grouped by nationality. No one any longer denies the existence of an intellectual movement extending from Charlemagne to Petrarch, no one hesitates to connect it with the brilliant Renaissance of the sixteenth century.

The scholarly labors of the last century have likewise established the fact of a remarkable political and social activity during the Middle Ages. The many barbarian laws which the Church strove to imbue with a Christian spirit, the many national assemblies and councils where parliamentary life began to take form, the many political enterprises undertaken by the popes to assure harmony among Christian peoples and to fortify them against the infidels, the great energy expended to safeguard communal rights and corporative franchises, the many persistent efforts to maintain the distinction between things spiritual and things temporal, a distinction unknown to pagan antiquity—all these considerations assuredly justify our regarding the Middle Ages as the incubation period of modern times. Says Lavissee:

The Middle Ages sketched the main outlines of the nations which have become distinct entities in the course of our times. The Middle Ages and our age are the two most important periods in the political history of Europe.³

³ Lavissee, *Vue générale de l'histoire politique de l'Europe*, p. vii.

The history of Europe would have been altogether different, our ancestors would have found different political ideas, as also different feelings and passions, if the Church and the papacy had not proposed an ideal that dominated them. . . . If you suppress the part played by the papacy, by the same stroke you wipe out that oneness of ecclesiastical and Christian civilization in which the nations remained so long merged. . . . In such case the history of the ancient world is forgotten: Charlemagne is not the successor of the Caesars, Otto does not found the Holy Empire. The contest between the spiritual and the temporal, which was the great civil war of the Middle Ages, has then no reasonable basis, nor has the accord of the Christian world against the infidel: the knight's sword is not blessed by the priest, and history will not relate the poem of the crusades.⁴

During these ten centuries the Church made particular effort to imbue the barbarian world with her spirit. "Imagine what our modern thought and our modern literature would be if we were to leave out the history of those councils and religious orders, those popes who for a thousand years by means of bulls governed that world which the old Romans, with their emperors and their legions, had difficulty in keeping subdued." ⁵

Undoubtedly this movement was also marked by painful clashes, backward tendencies, and deplorable failures. Men of that time sometimes sinned grievously through outbursts of unrestrained passion, sometimes they erred through childlike idealism and a disregard for critical standards. In the time of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Louis, men were still too much given to settling intellectual questions by appeal to Aristotle, and to solving political or religious questions by threat of the stake. But to complain that the transformation was not speedier shows a misunderstanding of the laws by which ideas and human institutions develop.

⁴ *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, December 15, 1886: "L'entrée en scène de la papauté," by E. Lavisse, p. 843.

⁵ Silvestre de Sacy, *Preface to the letters of St. Francis de Sales*, pp. vi-ix.

As fully revealed by the history of our day, the Church was ever heedful of these abuses and was tireless in her patient efforts to suppress them. In glowing words the historian Taine describes this work of the Church as teacher of the barbarian world. He says :

The clergy, for over five hundred years, saves what it can still save of human culture. It sends missionaries to the barbarians or converts them directly after their entrance. . . . Before the bishop in his gilded cope, before the monk, "emaciated, clad in skins," the converted German stood fear-stricken as before a sorcerer. In his calm moments, after the chase or inebriety, the vague divination of a mysterious and grandiose future, the dim conception of an unknown tribunal, the rudiment of conscience which he already had in his forests beyond the Rhine, arouses in him through sudden alarms half-formed, menacing visions. At the moment of violating a sanctuary he asks whether he may not fall on its threshold with vertigo and a broken neck. Convinced through his own perplexity, he stops and spares the farm, the village, and the town which live under the priest's protection. On the other hand, among the warrior chiefs with long hair, by the side of kings clad in furs, the mitred bishop and abbot with shaven brows, take seats in the assemblies ; they alone know how to use the pen and how to discuss. Secretaries, councillors, theologians, they participate in all edicts ; they have their hand in the government ; they strive through its agency to bring a little order out of immense disorder ; to render the law more rational and more humane, to reëstablish or preserve piety, instruction, justice, property, and especially marriage. . . . In its churches and in its convents, the Church preserves the ancient acquisitions of humanity, the Latin tongue, Christian literature and theology, a portion of pagan literature and science, architecture, sculpture, painting, the arts and industries which aid worship, the more valuable industries which provide man with bread, clothing, and shelter, and especially the greatest of all human acquisitions, and the most opposed to the vagabond humor of the idle and plundering barbarian, the habit and taste for labor. . . . To food for the body they add food for the soul, not less essential ; for, along with aliments, it was still necessary to furnish man with inducements to live, or, at the

very least, with the resignation which makes life endurable. . . . Down to the middle of the thirteenth century the clergy stands alone in furnishing this. Through its innumerable legends of saints, through its cathedrals and their construction, through its statues and their expression, through its services and their still transparent meaning, it rendered visible "the kingdom of God," and set up an ideal world like a magnificent golden pavilion at the end of a miry morass. . . . The clergy thus nourished men for more than twelve centuries, and in the grandeur of its recompense we can estimate the depth of their gratitude. Its popes, for two hundred years, were the dictators of Europe. . . . Let us not believe that man counterfeits gratitude, or that he gives without a valid motive; he is too egotistical and too envious for that. Whatever may be the institution, ecclesiastical or secular, whatever may be the clergy, the contemporaries who observe it for forty generations are not bad judges; they surrender to it their will and their possessions, just in proportion to its services, and the excess of their devotion may measure the immensity of its benefaction.⁶

It is not within the scope of the present volume to relate the complete triumph of the Christian spirit over the barbarian world. The five centuries that form the subject of our study show us only the patient, painful, and sometimes tragic elaboration of that ideal of Christianity which the Church pursued through many vicissitudes.

Three classes of workers took part in this endeavor: popes, bishops, and Christian rulers. The first task, to strengthen the Church at its center, engaged the attention of the popes, especially of St. Gregory the Great.⁷

Once the power of the Holy See was firmly established, the Church could safely be spread by its missionaries in the barbarian world. This was the task of those great bishops who not

⁶ Taine, *The Ancient Régime*, pp. 3-5.

⁷ This strengthening of the Church in its center and this growth of the temporal power of the papacy were the result of providential events rather than a premeditated plan of the popes. When St. Gregory the Great entered upon his pontificate, he was alarmed at the responsibility laid upon him, and his first impulse was to escape from the burden.

only "made France," as someone has said, but also England, Germany, and the other nations.⁸ The type of these missionary bishops is St. Boniface the apostle of Germany.

When the barbarian tribes were converted, the Church undertook to group the Christian nations into a mighty federation that was called the Christian Republic or Christendom. In this work the popes and bishops were aided by the Christian rulers, the greatest of whom was Charlemagne.

Just when these three tasks seemed to be completed, the dismemberment of Charlemagne's empire and the political and social upheavals that followed in the course of the ninth and tenth centuries led to a religious crisis from which the papacy had much to suffer. But God did not abandon His Church. In the darkest hours of this crisis we see the lofty and majestic figure of Pope St. Nicholas I, who asserted the rights of the Holy See with a sovereign authority. It was during the weakest and most abject of the pontificates that Charlemagne's great work was restored. The unworthy John XII became the instrument of Providence in re-establishing the Holy Empire in the person of Otto I. That mighty institution, by again bringing into alliance the pope, the bishops, and the Christian rulers, would, in spite of painful strifes, safeguard the political unity of the West for several centuries and, to some extent, would preserve the ideal of Christendom.

⁸ Cf. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; De Maistre, *The Generative Principle of Political Constitutions*.

PART I

THE PAPACY

CHAPTER I

From the Fall of the Western Empire to the Coming of St. Gregory the Great (476-590)

ON August 23, 476, an officer of the guards, Odoacer a Herulian, dethroned the last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus, placed him in seclusion in the villa of Lucullus (near Naples), and, with the consent of the Senate, proclaimed himself king.¹ This palace revolution appeared not to affect the feelings of the people of Rome and Italy very greatly.² They did not lament the removal of the handsome emperor,³ who bore two glorious names, the one recalling the founder of Rome, the other that of the founder of the Empire. They accepted the barbarian, who promised them peace and tolerance and who kept his promises pretty well. Not until fifty years later does Marcellinus in his *Chronicon*⁴ mention for the first time the event of August 23, 476, as if historians needed half a century to perceive how great a change had taken place at that date in the political organization of the West.

Such a revolution did, in fact, have an immense historical

¹ He is commonly spoken of in history as king of Italy. But he called himself simply "king," without qualification. See Grisar, *History of Rome*, Vol. I, no. 73. [Tr.]

² Le Nain de Tillemont speaks of Romulus Augustulus only in his history of Odoacer. He says: "We are obliged to place three Roman emperors under the heading of a barbarian prince, a barbarian whose country and nation are unknown to us. But these emperors are Glycerius, Nepos, and Augustulus, whom we may call unknown, or as known simply for having buried with themselves the Roman Empire in the West." Tillemont, *Histoire des empereurs*, VI, 422.

³ *Pulcher erat* ("he was handsome"), says the anonymous author published by Valois, *Rerum francarum*, Vol. III. The same testimony is given by Procopius, *PG*, Vol. CXXXVII, and *Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae*. Tillemont (*op. cit.*, VI, 434) says: "This ruler is praised for his beauty. Such pitiful commendation is the only praise bestowed on the last of the emperors."

⁴ Marcellinus, *Chronicon* (MGH, *auctores antiquiss.*, IX, 91).

significance. Henceforth Rome would no longer see an emperor residing within her walls; the imperial emblems would again appear there only with Charlemagne. On the other hand the pope's influence, which had continued to grow since the time of Constantine, became dominant. Even the phantom of an Augustulus or an Olybrius carried with it the remembrance and the title of imperial majesty and, in the eyes of the old ceremonious Romans, placed legal limitations to the papal power. The new master of Rome and Italy, uncouth and half-ashamed of his success, who dared not wear the gold-bordered triumphal toga of the *imperatores* ⁵ and who sent back to Zeno, the emperor of the East, the insignia of the imperial office, could not wield such influence.

Hence it became particularly imperative for the papacy to strengthen itself in the Eternal City. At the very time when the Empire was falling, urgent appeals for more apostles came from all parts of Europe—Germany, Spain, Gaul, Britain—where missionaries had already gone but where the Christian centers had recently been laid waste by invasions and the Arian heresy.

But, to engage with security in this work of fresh expansion, the Church had first to become more and more purified in its center and to become more closely bound to its supreme head, the Roman pontiff. This twofold task was the object of the popes' constant anxieties. They devoted themselves to it even while continuing the work of spreading the faith among the pagans.⁶

⁵ On the imperial dress and the gorgeous ornaments added to it in the latter period of the Empire, see Cagnat, art. "imperator" in Daremberg and Saglio, *Dict. des antiquités grecques et romaines*, III, 426 f.

⁶ In this first chapter we shall only incidentally mention the government of the popes in matters of Church discipline, public worship, or the repression of existing heresies. All that is treated in the history of the early Church. Here we shall consider the action of the popes only in so far as it was a direct preparation for the Middle Ages. Later on we shall speak of the dealings of the Holy See with the barbarian nations when we relate the history of each of those nations.

Before beginning the narration of those prolonged efforts, we must cast a glance on the city of Rome and consider the effect which contact with the barbarian world had upon its bishops and priests, and also upon its practices of public worship.

St. Sidonius Apollinaris

Two authors of this epoch provide us with most exact information about the condition of the Christian world at the end of the fifth century. These two writers are the Gallo-Roman Bishop Sidonius Apollinaris and a humble monk of Lower Noricum, Eugippius, the author of the *Life of St. Severinus*.

But alas! all that was only a brilliant and deceptive appearance. Poverty, immorality, and superstition were the deep-seated evils of fifth century Rome, which was then in the hands of the barbarians.

Caius Sollius Apollinaris Sidonius was born at Lyons about 430 and died at Clermont in 482. His father was an imperial prefect, and he himself was prefect of Rome, a count, a patrician, a son-in-law of Emperor Avitus. During his lifetime his statue was placed in the Forum of Trajan. In short, he is one of the most notable personages of that period. After a varied career in the world, he received holy orders and, in 470, as bishop of Clermont in Auvergne (France), he entered upon the task of Christianizing that semi-barbarous district. There he displayed so many great virtues that the Church soon placed him on her altars. If we wish a description of the Rome of that time, we can find no more reliable testimony than his. Recent discoveries show that it is correct and exact.⁷

The outward appearance of the city and of its principal monuments was unchanged. The barbarians had destroyed

⁷ On Sidonius, see Tillemont, *Mémoires*, XVI, 195-284.

scarcely anything. They were satisfied with plundering it.⁸ In a letter to a Gallic nobleman whom he was inviting to come to Rome, Sidonius wrote: "Rome is the abode of law, the training-school of letters, the fount of honors, the head of the world, the motherland of freedom, the city unique upon earth, where none but the barbarian and the slave is foreign."⁹

The Senate was still enacting laws in accordance with the ancient formalities, which were scrupulously observed.¹⁰ The immense imperial baths were still the Romans' most elegant meeting-places.¹¹ The streets were gay with the costumes of antiquity. At the sports in the Circus the people continued their enthusiastic partisanship for the four colors of the rival contestants: white, blue, green, and red.¹²

Poverty

"Since the end of the Antonines' reigns, the resources of the economic life were being consumed by almost ceaseless military revolts, unbridled greed, unpunished thievery, disdain for voluntary labor, and the hideous plague of slavery."¹³ As the government obtained its chief revenue from land taxes, agriculture was abandoned. Whole provinces were left uncultivated. The Campania, which the barbarians had not ravaged or even passed through, contained 300,000 acres on which not a single person or farm house was to be found. The mining

⁸ "It is a perfect anachronism to speak of Rome being destroyed during the fifth century or even the sixth century. The destruction of ancient Rome was the slow work of later centuries, beginning perhaps about the seventh and lasting to the so-called Renaissance, and even well into the later period." Grisar, *History of Rome and the Popes in the Middle Ages*, I, 122.

⁹ Sidonius, Letter 6 (to Eutropius); *PL*, LVIII, 455; *MGH*, *auctores antiquiss.*, VIII, 9.

¹⁰ Sidonius, Letter 7; *PL*, LVIII, 459; *MGH*, *ibid.*, pp. 11 f.

¹¹ Sidonius, *Carmina*, 23; *PL*, LVIII, 744; *MGH*, *ibid.*, p. 261.

¹² *Micant colores, albus vel venetus, virens rubensque*. Sidonius, *Carmina*, 23; *PL*, LVIII, 739; *MGH*, *ibid.*, p. 257.

¹³ Robiou and Delaunay, *Les institutions de l'ancienne Rome*, III, 307.

business had been transferred from private or municipal management to the Treasury Department of the government and even to the emperors' personal control. But the mines were now exhausted.¹⁴ As there was a shortage of metal for coinage, the value of money increased. Thereafter usury became the great business and the great calamity. Three years' interest doubled the amount of a debt. The rich kept growing richer, and the poor poorer. More than ever the Circus was the usual place where the clamor of the people was heard, asking for bread. Sidonius says that, when he passed near the Circus, he dreaded hearing the awful shout of the Roman people's poverty and distress.¹⁵ Worse, however, than the suffering of poverty was the evil of immorality.

Immorality

That Roman world, which had only one great detestation, namely, an aversion to poverty,¹⁶ seemed to have only one great desire, that of pleasure. If the Gallo-Roman Sidonius Apollinaris, while passing near the Circus, feared hearing the outcries of poverty, he also dreaded to hear the sounds of pleasure-seeking sensuality when he drew near the imperial baths. He informs us that his friend Consentius took care to visit only those baths where Christian modesty was respected.

Barthold Georg Niebuhr, who knew ancient Rome so well, says:

In conjuring up the life of that epoch we cannot, in spite of our admiration, repress a shudder. Side by side with great virtue, the most fearful vices, from the earliest times, have had full sway; insatiable

¹⁴ Mispoulet, *Les institutions politiques des Romains*, II, 252-255.

¹⁵ *Vereor ne famem populi romani theatralis caveae fragor insonet*. Sidonius, Letter 10; *PL*, LVIII, 465; *MGH*, *ibid.*, VIII, 16.

¹⁶ "Under the Empire, Rome was the abode of a society of which Theodor Mommsen could write: 'At Rome, poverty was no longer the greatest disgrace and the worst crime, but the only one.'" Grisar, *op. cit.*, I, 187.

ambition, reckless disregard for the rights of others; callous indifference to human suffering; avarice—which later grew into rapacity—and class distinctions, whereby not only slaves and foreigners, but even freemen of the city, were treated with inhuman harshness.¹⁷

Claudius Rutilius, the pagan prefect of Rome in 417, when leaving Rome to return to Gaul, addressed to the Eternal City an invocation in which he connected the goddess Rome and the goddess Venus.¹⁸

Superstition

Superstitions never thrive more than in times of decadence. At the close of the fifth century they flourished at Rome in multiple form: pagan superstitions that continued after faith in the Olympian gods had been lost, superstitions imported from the East, popular superstitions born spontaneously of credulity, self-interest, or fear. Says Gaston Boissier: "When the Empire came to an end, paganism was dead or was on the point of breathing its last."¹⁹

Euhemerus' criticism, adopted by the Stoics, popularized at Rome by the works of Ennius and often made use of by Christian apologists, had contributed much to the destroying of faith in the pagan religion; and the defenders of paganism themselves sometimes furthered this work when they tried to defend their gods from the reproach of immorality by allegorical interpretations. But, says an eminent student of Roman antiquity, Joachim Marquardt, "such a skeptical attitude could not last. If in the depth of man's soul there is any ineradicable feeling, it is most certainly the feeling of his relations with the Divinity. Man's religious cravings were not satisfied. Other

¹⁷ Quoted by Grisar, *loc. cit.*

¹⁸ Claudius Rutilius, *De reditu suo*, Bk. I, verses 47 ff.

¹⁹ Gaston Boissier, *La fin du paganisme*, ed. 1894, II, 427.

nourishment had to be found for them. Tendencies in this direction appeared among the learned as well as among the rank and file.”²⁰

The Roman policy was to extend hospitality to all religions; it favored a sort of mythological and religious eclecticism so that, in the time of the Empire, there poured into Italy the religions and idolatries of the whole world. As Petronius says, “Many a province so abounds in divinities that it is easier to meet a god there than a man.”²¹

The first of these idols was the emperor. In most cities the worship of Rome and Augustus had its temples and municipal priests, and also its religious societies. “It tended to become the universal religion of the whole civilized world. You may, indeed, say that it was a merely external religion, but it was present everywhere, drawing to it the homage of the towns and, by the active propaganda of societies of *augustales*, reaching to the lowest strata of society.”²²

It is true that, in the last years of the Empire, the worship of the emperors had lost its prestige; but the worship of Rome persisted. “Hear me, O Rome, mother of men and mother of the gods,” says Claudius Rutilius in the fifth century.²³ At the end of the same century a decree of Theodoric still calls Rome “*sacratissima urbs*.”²⁴ This superstition of Eternal Rome was so powerful that the Christians had no small difficulty in guarding themselves against it. The Christian kept a sort of religious respect for old Rome, if only through patriotism and fidelity to old traditions, from which he could rid himself only with the

²⁰ Marquardt and Mommsen, *Manuel des antiquités romaines*, XII, 89.

²¹ S. Reinach, *Manuel de philologie classique*, according to Freund, *Triennium philologicum*, p. 351. Cf. Dufourcq, *La christianisation des foules*.

²² Bouché-Leclercq, *Manuel des institutions romaines*, p. 556. Cf. Beurlier, *Le culte imperial*.

²³ Rutilius, *op. cit.*, Bk. I, verse 49.

²⁴ Cassiodorus, Letters, Bk. VI, letter 18; *PL*, LXIX, 698; *MGH, ibid.*, XII, 190.

utmost difficulty. And this was the case not merely for those who, like Sidonius, were Romans by birth; it was also true of Christians of barbarian origin. Fulgentius bishop of Ruspe in Africa, who had been a high officer in the Vandal kingdom, came to Rome in 500. Dressed in his humble monastic habit, he joined the crowd attending some celebration in the Forum. In admiration he gazed upon those temples, those triumphal arches, and those memorials of great deeds, and, as his thoughts rose higher, he exclaimed: "If earthly Rome is so splendid, how beautiful the heavenly Jerusalem must be."²⁵

Among the Oriental religions, that of Mithra or the Sun seemed to triumph. It had a kind of baptism, a form of communion, and bloody purification ceremonies. Julian the Apostate gave it an ecclesiastical organization.²⁶ In connection with this religion and many others, such as the worship of Adonis of Byblos, of the *Virgo coelestis* of Carthage, and the *Mater Magna* of Pessinonte, popular superstitions multiplied. Each spring had its sprite, each locality its tutelar divinity, certain ceremonies and formularies had a sacred value in the eyes of the people.

In a word, what Bossuet says is quite true: Rome kept her monuments, but she had lost her empire. "The worship of the Roman gods had left deep impressions in the mind of the common people; but the majesty of the Roman name vanished. The Empire was broken up, and each barbarous race carried off some part of the wreckage. Rome herself, the very mention of whose name formerly inspired terror, now that she was seen to be vanquished, became the plaything and the prey of all the barbarians."²⁷

²⁵ *Quam speciosa potest esse Hierusalem coelestis, si sic fulget Roma terrestris. Life of St. Fulgentius*, chap. 13; *PL*, LXV, 131.

²⁶ Franz Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, tr. by Thomas J. McCormack; *Textes et documents figurés relatifs aux mystères de Mithra*.

²⁷ Bossuet, *Explication de l'Apocalypse*, chap. 3, no. 9.

St. Severinus

Just as the works of St. Sidonius Apollinaris inform us regarding the situation of the Church in the Roman world, the *Life of St. Severinus*, written by one of his disciples a short time after his death, supplies us with valuable data on the relations of the Church with the invading races.

Little is known about this apostle of Noricum. His humility, we are told, succeeded in hiding the secret of his noble birth from his closest disciples. But, says Tillemont, "there is every reason to suppose that Severinus was of the Latin race and of illustrious birth."²⁸ The desire for perfection prompted him to go to the desert places of the East. His biographer says that, following a divine revelation, he returned and settled in the Danube valley.²⁹ There he remained until his death in 482. Thus Providence placed him on the route of the great hordes of barbarians. The account of his relations with these new races is of the greatest interest to history. "We have few saints in antiquity whose history we can be more sure of than that of St. Severinus."³⁰

"The *Life of St. Severinus of Noricum* is a priceless work for the historian. It contains a treasury of information regarding the situation of the barbarians and the Romans in the eastern part of the Empire."³¹ The account of St. Severinus' life shows him having dealings with the Rugians, the Goths, the Suevi, the Heruli, the Alamanni, and the Turcilinges. His vir-

²⁸ Baudrillart, *Saint Séverien*, p. 39.

²⁹ "Lower Noricum, where the saint settled, included all the districts along the southern shore of the Danube, from Passau to Vienna and a little beyond." Tillemont, *Mémoires*, XVI, 168.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Auguste Molinier, *Manuel de bibliographie historique, les sources de l'histoire de France*, I, 410. Hermann Sauppe in 1877 (*MGH, auct. antiquiss.*, Vol. I) published a new critical edition of the *Vita Severini*. It differs but little from the Bollandists' edition (*Acta sanctorum*, January 8), as the learned editor declares, *MGH*, I, xv. This *Life* may be found also in *PL*, LXII, 1167-1199.

tues, his learning, his supernatural gifts, and his miracles won for him the respect of the most savage. At a word from the saint, barbarian chiefs turned aside from their intended route, stopped a pillaging, or spared a monastery. We see him intervening in conflicts between the barbarians themselves. God sometimes gives him a revelation about their future. "One day," relates his biographer, "Severinus saw entering his cabin a very tall young man dressed in the coarsest garments. As the young barbarian, to avoid striking the roof of the poor hut, stood with bowed head before the saint, God revealed to the latter the glorious destiny of the stranger. After a little conversation with the visitor, Severinus said to him: 'Go forward. Today you are still clad in the worthless skins of animals, but soon you shall make gifts from the treasures of Italy.' " ³²

The barbarian was Odoacer. In consequence of this meeting with the saint of Noricum, the conqueror of Romulus Augustulus always had a religious respect for holy things. He professed a special esteem for Severinus. After the apostle's death, Odoacer, when transferring the people of Noricum into Italy, respected the last wish of his holy friend, who had asked that his remains never be separated from his people. The venerated body of St. Severinus was buried in an Italian villa, *Mons Feletus* (Montefeltro), which has never been exactly identified. Some years later it was removed to the villa of Lucullus where the last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus, banished by Odoacer, had just died. ³³

But the barbarians did not always prove themselves so grateful. Moreover, it is not recorded that St. Severinus con-

³² Eusebius, *Life of St. Severinus*, chap. 2; *PL*, LXII, 1176.

³³ The disciples of St. Severinus changed the villa of Lucullus into a monastery. Today it is called Pizzofalcone. "The picture of the saint and his pious monks inheriting the lavish splendor of Lucullus, is one well in keeping with that of St. Benedict taking possession of Nero's villa on the Upper Anio, or that of St. Columban settling with his followers in the ancient baths of Luxovius." Grisar, *op. cit.*, III, 233.

verted a single one of them.³⁴ Certain idolatrous practices, which seemed forever uprooted, sprang up again even among Christians;³⁵ some barbarian ruler, who had promised to respect holy things, would be found pillaging the goods of the poor and of captives.³⁶ Says an ancient writer who knew them well: "A Rugian counts a day wasted if he has not committed some evil deed."

These barbarians were, indeed, children, capricious, cruel, proud, overbearing, and fickle. They flew into a rage over nothing and carried their fury to the last extreme. Excessively impressionable, they shook with fear as suddenly as they poured out threats. Without any interval they passed from insults to prayers. They were crafty, treacherous, able to conceal the vilest designs under a gentle and friendly manner. We do not mean that they were always insincere when they made a promise, but they seemed unable to resist a temptation; invariably their cupidity was stronger than faithfulness to a promise.³⁷

The biographer of St. Severinus tells us the story of a certain Fava, king of the Rugians, and his wife Gisa. Our saint obtained very fine promises from them, but the promises were scarcely ever kept.³⁸ The papacy would have many such experiences with the barbarians. Centuries must pass before these new races give the world a St. Louis of France, a St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and a St. Adelaide of Germany.

Eastern Difficulties

The great obstacles which the Church encountered in the decadent civilization of the Roman people were therefore in-

³⁴ Tillemont, XVI, 170.

³⁵ *Acta sanctorum*, January 8, p. 488.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 494.

³⁷ Baudrillart, *Saint Séverin*, pp. 28 f.

³⁸ *Acta sanctorum*, January 8, p. 492.

creased by the difficulties that arose from the brutal barbarism of the new races. Added to these were endless conflicts which the East, so resourceful in subterfuges, stirred up, sometimes to prolong the subtle ramifications of the Christological heresies, sometimes to set up, in opposition to the old Rome now stripped of its emperor, the claims of the new Rome and its pompous *basileus*.³⁹

In vain had the Council of Chalcedon (451) declared the necessity of confessing one only Lord in two natures, thus condemning the two errors of Nestorius and Eutyches; the spirit of schism and revolt did not consider itself vanquished. In 481 the crafty Acacius patriarch of Constantinople, on the pretext of solidifying the peace, in agreement with Peter Mongus patriarch of Alexandria, drew up a new Creed which, while reproving Eutyches and Nestorius, abrogated the Council of Chalcedon. The next year Emperor Zeno's arrogant intervention backed the revolt of the two patriarchs. In opposition to the definition of the fourth ecumenical council, the Byzantine autocrat issued his famous Henoticon (Act of Union), which gave the force of law to the Creed of Acacius. The imperial edict, instead of calming the religious dissensions, did but increase them. The Pope protested against the abrogation of the Council of Chalcedon and excommunicated Peter Mongus. And the most zealous followers of Eutyches preferred to withdraw from their leader Peter Mongus rather than give up their Monophysite doctrine; they were called Acephali (headless) and soon became subdivided into numerous sects with no discernible difference between them. Such was the origin of the Acacian Schism. Even after the death of the scheming prelate (489), his name continued to be a rallying-sign for all the enemies of the Catholic faith in the East, until the celebrated Formula of Pope Hormisdas who, in 519, issued a solemn anathema against Acacius and members of his party.

³⁹ This was the title taken by the emperors of Constantinople.

Fivefold Mission of the Papacy

The popes whom divine providence placed at the head of the Church at this period recognized the seriousness of the situation. To ward off the most pressing dangers, to preserve Christians from the perils that came to them from the Roman corruption, from the barbarian incursions, and from Byzantine encroachments—such was the first task, in a way defensive, of the pontiffs from the fall of the Roman Empire until the coming of St. Gelasius. Next we see four great popes accomplish a more positive work: they were St. Gelasius, St. Symmachus, St. Hormisdas, and Pelagius I. By his abolition of the Lupercalia and by his liturgical institutions, St. Gelasius gave the final blow to the pagan practices and renewed the Christian life; in the famous Palmary Synod, St. Symmachus saw his disciplinary supremacy universally acknowledged; by the celebrated formula since known as the Formula of Hormisdas, the pope of that name affirmed, before both the East and the West, his supreme doctrinal authority; and Pelagius I, by his organization of the papal patrimony, outlined the rules which his successors would follow in the administration of the temporal domain of the Holy See. While these major events were taking place, God was preparing about the Holy See a sort of peaceful and courageous army of auxiliaries by the foundation of the monks of the West. Before relating these five glorious episodes in the history of the papacy, we must give an account of the patient efforts that made them possible.

Pope St. Simplicius (468–483)

Simplicius ⁴⁰ (468–483), who witnessed the fall of the Empire, seems to have combined a firmness of character with great practical sense. He was especially engaged in organizing

⁴⁰ The *Liber pontificalis* (I, 249) says he was a native of Tivoli and the son of Castinus.

the ecclesiastical service, which had been so often disturbed by the barbarian "tumults."⁴¹

In the fifth century the religious service in Rome was celebrated in twenty-five "presbyteral" churches, called "titles" (*tituli*), to which priests were especially assigned. This number of twenty-five *tituli* remained unchanged until the year 1000.

But in addition to these titular churches, there arose, both within the city and in the Roman rural district, a considerable number of places of worship, burial chapels, and monuments erected in honor of the martyrs. Thither the Christians were fond of going, to pray for the strength they needed to practice the Gospel precepts amid the scandals of pagan Rome.

It was to Rome also that people came from all parts of the Christian world to venerate the glorious memorials contained in the basilicas of St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Lawrence.⁴² They came from Africa with St. Fulgentius, from Italy with St. Paulinus of Nola,⁴³ from Gaul with St. Hilary,⁴⁴ from Ireland with St. Magniscius, a disciple of St. Patrick.⁴⁵ To Rome they came that they might imbibe the Christian spirit at its very source.⁴⁶ But the frequent incursions of barbarians led to a disordering of the exercise of public worship. The catacombs, which had been so venerated by Christians, who called them "the cemeteries of the martyrs,"⁴⁷ were considerably damaged by the enemy; lack of security in the environs of

⁴¹ The Romans used the word *tumultus* for the state of siege declared on the occasion of sudden attacks that endangered the state.

⁴² These are the three basilicas mentioned by the *Liber pontificalis* in the life of St. Simplicius (468-483). *Liber pont.*, I, 249.

⁴³ St. Paulinus, Letters; *PL*, LXI, 235, 247, 382.

⁴⁴ *Acta sanctorum*, April 6.

⁴⁵ *Op. cit.*, September 3.

⁴⁶ Guiraud, "Rome, ville sainte au V^e siècle," in the *R. H. et L. Rel.*, 1898, pp. 55 ff.

⁴⁷ This popular phrase, *coemeteria sanctorum martyrum*, led to the belief that all the catacombs were filled with martyrs' bodies. In reality the vast multitude of the bodies buried there were those of ordinary Christians. The bodies of martyrs in the catacombs were very rare.

Rome had in some places interrupted the traditional liturgical worship in those venerable catacombs. Furthermore the Roman clergy, at that time including only parochial priests, called titular or cardinal priests,⁴⁸ was not numerous enough for the service of the catacombs and the open-air cemeteries that had been constructed quite close by. These cemetery shrines became likewise places of worship for the country people of the neighborhood. In particular the service of the three churches of the catacombs outside the city walls—the basilicas of St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Lawrence—had grown extensively. For those three basilicas Simplicius organized a weekly service to be supplied by the parochial priests of neighboring titles. They attended these basilicas in turn and there prepared the faithful for the sacraments of penance and baptism.⁴⁹ The psalmody of the choir office continued to be entrusted to monks living near these basilicas.

Simplicius was no less zealous in the conservation and administration of Church property. He issued regulations that thenceforth the income of the Churches and the offerings of the faithful be divided into four parts: only one part would revert to the bishop; the three other parts would be used for

⁴⁸ Cardinals, that is, attached to a church, *incardinati*. This epithet given to all parochial priests has nothing in common with our present word "cardinal," a member of the Sacred College. It was not until the eighth century that the Lateran Basilica was under the charge of bishops of the environs of Rome. This was the origin of the cardinal-bishops, or suburbicarian bishops. Cf. Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, I, 250.

⁴⁹ *Hic constituit ad Sanctum Petrum apostolum et ad Sanctum Paulum apostolum et ad Sanctum Laurentium martyrem ebdomas ut presbyteri manerent, propter penitentes et baptismum* (*Lib. pont.*, I, 249). The first edition of the *Liber pontificalis* says: . . . *Propter baptismum et poenitentiam petentibus*. This text is one of the most important for the history of the sacrament of penance. If we compare this text with a similar text in the note on Pope Marcellus (*Lib. pont.*, I, 164) and with the evidence in Socrates and Sozomen (*PG*, LXVII, 613 f., 1457 f.), we see that the baptismal and penitential ministry here referred to is merely the preparation of catechumens for baptism and of penitents for their public reconciliation; because at that time, except in case of necessity, the celebration of baptism and the reconciliation of penitents required the presence of the bishop. These ceremonies were performed at a general meeting, not for one parish at a time. Cf. *Lib. pont.*, I, 165.

the support of the lower clergy, for the relief of the poor, and for the maintenance of the churches (*ecclesiasticis fabricis*). This seems to be the origin of the *fabrica ecclesiae*. The word *fabrica*, meaning construction or repairs, came to signify the income intended for the work of repairs and maintenance, then the administration of this income.⁵⁰ "It would be hard to say exactly when the practice began of dividing the whole revenue of the Church into four equal parts. . . . The same use was made of Church property during the first three or four centuries; but it does not seem that the canons had prescribed this exact division into equal portions. Pope Simplicius is perhaps the first to speak of it, although he refers to it as an old custom."⁵¹

Were these regulations poorly observed? The zealous Pontiff employed the utmost energy to make offenders disgorge, even if they were in the highest ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Gaudentius bishop of A蓀inium allowed some sacred vessels to be sold, and appropriated to himself the money thus obtained. Simplicius ordered the alienated objects to be returned to the Church treasury; and, as Gaudentius had dared to perform illicit ordinations, the Pope took from him the right to ordain.⁵² The same prohibition was applied to John archbishop of Ravenna, who had been guilty of a similar offense.⁵³

Pope St. Felix III (483-492)

Simplicius' successor, Felix III,⁵⁴ was a member of the Roman patrician family of the Anicii. Everywhere he defended

⁵⁰ It seems that the council of the *fabrica* was not instituted until the thirteenth century. A council held in 1287 regulated the appointment of its members. Imbart de la Tour, *Questions d'histoire*, p. 273.

⁵¹ Thomassin, *Ancienne et nouvelle discipline*, Part III, Bk. II, chap. 13.

⁵² Jaffé, *Reg. pont. rom.*, I, 570.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, I, 583.

⁵⁴ Or Felix II, if we do not admit in the list of popes the Felix II whom the *Liber pontificalis* places between Pope Liberius and Pope Damasus. See Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, pp. cxxiii, cxxv, 209 note 17.

the cause of the Church with the soul of an apostle and the attitude of a true Roman of the old stock. He called Emperor Zeno his son and showered on him testimonials of paternal affection; but when he saw the Emperor's obstinacy in the heresy of Acacius, he wrote to him as follows: "The highest power in temporal matters has been bestowed upon you, together with the obligation of leaving the direction of spiritual affairs in the hands of those whom God has appointed for the purpose. Your government has everything to gain by allowing the Catholic Church to govern itself in accordance with its own laws." ⁵⁵

The character and virtues of this great pope fitted him for mighty deeds. But he was rendered almost powerless by the evil of the times. His great-grandson, St. Gregory the Great, would accomplish his work. ⁵⁶

The pontificate of Felix III was, in fact, much disturbed by the Ostrogoth invasion of Italy and by the Vandal persecution in Africa. It was in the autumn of 488 that Theodoric, king of the "Eastern Goths," after gathering all the men of his race on the banks of the Danube, turned his steps toward Italy, at the head of an army of 200,000 warriors. As we are told by a contemporary writer, "he brought with him a whole horde of barbarians who dwelt in carts, who pillaged and carried off everything they could lay hands on as they went along." ⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Jaffé, I, 612.

⁵⁶ Felix III lost his wife while he was a deacon. De Rossi discovered and identified the epitaph of St. Felix' noble wife.

Levitae conjux Petronia, forma pudoris,

His mea deponens sedibus ossa loco.

Parcite vos lacrymis, dulces cum conjugē natae

Viventemque Deo credite flere nefas. (De Rossi, *Inscr. christ.*, I, 371.) St. Gregory speaks of his ancestor Felix (Homily 38 on the Gospels). In the fifth century the Church law simply required that clerics in major orders should live in continence. St. Leo the Great wrote: "If they are married, they are not obliged to dismiss their wives. . . . Let their carnal marriage be transformed into a spiritual union." St. Leo, Letter 167; *PL*, LIV, 1204.

⁵⁷ Ennodius, *Panegyricus Theodorici*.

From the autumn of 489 until the assassination of Odoacer by Theodoric in 493, there was nothing but scenes of warfare and devastation. Yet Rome escaped being sacked. At Ravenna, when the Bishop appeared before the King of the Ostrogoths "with a procession of priests and clerics, with crosses, censers, and the holy Gospels, Theodoric promised to spare not only the people of Ravenna, but also all the Romans."⁵⁸

At that same time the Christians of Africa experienced a terrible persecution by the Vandal King Huneric. History records few persecutions that were bloodier. Felix III was powerless to stop it. He requested Emperor Zeno to use his influence with Huneric to obtain a respite in the persecution. Zeno sent an envoy for this purpose, but the attempt was fruitless. Nothing but the tyrant's death put an end to the persecution.

Pope St. Gelasius (492-496)

What Felix III hoped to accomplish, Gelasius I (492-496)⁵⁹ began to carry out. When the new Pontiff entered upon his office, the Christians of Africa had again found peace under the Vandal King Thrasamund (484-496); Theodoric would soon give peace to Italy. The King of the Ostrogoths, free of any rival by Odoacer's death in 493, wanted to deserve the name of great by his government, as he had merited it by his victories. Of this great statesman, this strange and mighty genius, Amédée Thierry says, with some exaggeration, that "Attila had more feelings of pity than Theodoric the barbarian, but few Romans of his time surpassed Theodoric the civilized in generous ideas." During the first half of his reign

⁵⁸ *MGH, scriptores rerum longobardarum et italicarum*, p. 303.

⁵⁹ Gelasius was a native of Africa, the son of Valerius, says the *Liber pontificalis*, I, 255. In a letter to Emperor Anastasius (Jaffé, 632), he calls himself a Roman. The two statements are not necessarily contradictory. He might call himself a Roman because, at the time of his birth, Africa, or at least the city of Carthage, was under the Roman power. Duchesne surmises that Gelasius was rather old at the time of his election to the papacy. *Lib. pont.*, I, 256 note.

the King of the Ostrogoths, so far as he was not led astray by pride, was greatly pleased to become the defender of the Church and of public order. Gelasius profited by these good dispositions. The Pope was clear-headed and energetic. Perhaps of all the popes who came before St. Gregory, none had a clearer perception of the future or prepared for it with more watchful solicitude. He comprehended, better than Simplicius and Felix did, that the work which Providence destined for the papacy could not be performed without a preliminary work of social pacification.

His astounding activity and his marvelous power of work enabled him, while attacking the Acacian dispute with rare energy, to extend his watchful protection to all the oppressed, so numerous at that period of continual disturbances. This fact is evidenced by his numerous dealings with bishops and those who held worldly power, whenever rights, freedom, and poverty were outraged in any manner. The *Liber pontificalis* says that "he saved the city of Rome from the danger of famine."⁶⁰ We have no details of this incident. But we may suppose that he relieved the needs of the indigent by a wise distribution of relief, thanks to the revenue of the Church's patrimony and to alms collected through his care.⁶¹ From him comes this maxim in which we can see the principle of the whole social activity of the Church: "Nothing is more befitting the priestly office than the protection of the poor and the weak."⁶²

Suppression of the Lupercalia

One of the outstanding events of his pontificate was the blow he gave to the old Roman paganism by abolishing the feast of the Lupercalia.

⁶⁰ *Lib. pont.*, I, 256.

⁶¹ This seems indicated by a letter from Gelasius to Rusticus bishop of Lyons. Jaffé, I, 634.

⁶² Jaffé, I, 629, according to a letter recently discovered in the British Museum.

The famine just mentioned had led a number of Christians, influenced by some remnant of pagan superstition, to invoke Castor and Pollux. This attachment to the old ceremonies of paganism seems to have been true of several members of the Roman nobility. Through patriotism or through devotedness to old traditions, they continued the practice of ceremonies which their Christian conscience should have made them reject. Gelasius needed all his energy to fight this serious danger, which would have resulted in altering the purity of Christian doctrine and morals.

This strange aberration of patriotism and of the traditional spirit was evident especially on the occasion of the Lupercalia. Following an ancient custom, established in honor of the god Pan, the destroyer of wolves, or perhaps in memory of the legendary wolf that suckled Romulus, on the fifteenth of the kalends of March, i. e., February 15, groups of young men, half-naked after the ancient manner, ran about the city to drive out evil, as one hunts wolves. These *luperci*, as they were called, struck whatever women they met with their sacred whips, and indulged in various kinds of licentious conduct.⁶³ A papal decree had ordered the suppression of these feasts. But, in Gelasius' pontificate, a pestilence that fell upon the city was ascribed to the discontinuance of the Lupercalia. A group of Christians, with Senator Andromachus at its head, wanted to re-establish the old licentious ceremony. If we are to judge by the tone of Gelasius' reply, the memorial presented by these Christians must have been haughty to the point of insolence. These partisans of paganism and of tradition went so far as to charge the Pope with weakness, laxity, and even heresy. A long letter from Gelasius to Senator Andromachus and his partisans shows us the depth of the evil and makes us ac-

⁶³ Marquardt and Mommsen, *Manuel des antiquités romaines*, XIII, 173-183. Art. "Lupercaliales" in Daremberg and Saglio, *Dict. des antiquités grecques et romaines*. The purifying whips were called *februae*. From this was derived the word *februare*, "to purify." The month of February (*Februarius*) was the month of the purification.

quainted with the difficulties which the influence of the Church encountered in the upper classes of society at that period.

The Supreme Pontiff begins with an outspoken denunciation of those "who make charges without acquainting themselves with the facts, who would teach what they have not learned, who, without adequate inquiry, are in a hurry to find fault, seeking only to utter insults regarding matters of which they are ignorant." ⁶⁴ Says the Pope: "You, forsooth, are the ones who charge us with being easy-going and lax in censuring the vices of the Church." ⁶⁵ But who are you? You are, indeed, neither Christians nor pagans, but are rather people devoid of faith or morals." ⁶⁶ The letter closes with an absolute and most forceful prohibition against any Christian taking part in the Lupercalia.

The last portion of the document is of great historical interest, showing us that this ban of a pagan feast was only an episode in the unremitting strife which the supreme pontiffs had to maintain in their efforts gradually to free Christian practices from ancient superstitions. "You tell me," says Gelasius, "that this practice has been carried on for ages past and therefore may not be suppressed." ⁶⁷ In substance the Pope goes on thus: "I know well enough how long the evil has endured. And other things have been tolerated among Christians. Even idolatrous sacrifices. Each of my predecessors, little by little, according to his prudence or his courage, has eliminated the most dangerous evils. Have they done well? Have they done ill? God is their judge. But I am responsible only for my own conduct. I reject and condemn your pagan Lupercalia." ⁶⁸ An old tradition credits Pope Gelasius with establishing the

⁶⁴ *Qui, studio cacologiae, quae nesciunt arguentes.* Gelasius, *Adversus Andromachum*; PL, LIX, 111.

⁶⁵ *Qui nos arguunt segnes esse censores in vitiis Ecclesiae coercendis.* Ibid.

⁶⁶ *Dicite nobis nec christiani nec pagani, ubique corrupti, nusquam integri.* PL, LIX, 114.

⁶⁷ *Sed dicitis tot saeculis rem gestam non oportere secludi.* PL, LIX, 116.

⁶⁸ *Idem.*

feast of the Purification of Our Lady (Candlemas) and says that it was instituted, with its procession of candles, the more effectively to abolish the Lupercalia procession. But we know the feast of the Purification existed in the East at the end of the fourth century, since the pilgrim Etheria (Silvia) witnessed it in Jerusalem in 386,⁶⁹ and it was celebrated there on February 15. True, there is no mention of it at Rome before the seventh century. Perhaps its introduction in the West goes back to St. Gelasius. In any event, the identity of date between the feast of the pagan purification and the feast of the Christian Purification is striking and may allow us to suppose some connection between the two.⁷⁰

But Pope Gelasius did, in fact, very actively engage in the work of making the regulations of the liturgy more precise, and enriching the mass with new collects and new prefaces. This was an indirect but effective way of combating the last remains of the pagan superstitions. It was likewise a means of safeguarding the purity of dogma, since the law of prayer naturally becomes the law of belief, *lex orandi lex credendi*. To what extent the Sacramentary bearing the name of Gelasius

⁶⁹ Cabrol, Study on the *Peregrinatio Silviae*.

⁷⁰ A practice which the Church commonly adopted was to alienate the Christians from the pagan feasts by replacing those feasts with solemnities that had some analogy to them. Thus the St. Mark's procession, which was held on April 25 in the Roman campania, replaced the pagan custom of the *robigoalia*. The feast of the Chair of St. Peter, father of the Christian family, was instituted and fixed on January 22 because on that day the pagans celebrated the feast of *cara cognatio*, or feast of the family, which was an occasion for banquets that Christians should abstain from. Even the feast of Christmas, *Natale*, seems to have been put on December 25 because that was the date of a profane feast, *Natalis invicti*, the feast of the invincible god of the Sun. The Ember Days at first were celebrated only three times a year (in June, September, and December) and their liturgical texts explicitly refer to the different periods of farming; according to the conjectures of Dom Germain Morin, they probably took the place of the three pagan *feriae* (the *feriae messis*, the *feriae vindemiales*, and the *feriae sementinae*). *Revue bénédictine*, 1897, p. 340; Grisar, *History of Rome*, III, 281. Cf. Cabrol, *Les origines liturgiques*; also two articles by Dom Cabrol in the *Revue pratique d'apologétique*: "Le paganisme dans la liturgie," November, 1906, and "L'idolatrie dans l'Église," October, 1907.

is really his work remains a moot question; ⁷¹ but we know he composed a sacramentary as well as several hymns and homilies on liturgical subjects. These have been preserved.⁷²

Authority of the Apostolic See

The memory of St. Gelasius has always been highly honored in the Church. Says Bossuet: "No one has spoken more magnificently of the greatness of the see occupied by the popes." The Vatican Council took from his writings several of its expressions in its constitution *De ecclesia*, in the matter of the primacy of the see of Rome.

One of St. Gelasius' most remarkable sayings is this, which we find in a letter from him to Emperor Anastasius: "The Apostolic See's confession of faith is unassailable; it is impossible for it to be stained by any false doctrine or be contaminated by any error." ⁷³ To that same emperor he wrote: "Know that the world is ruled over by two great powers: that of the pontiffs and that of the kings, but the authority of the pontiffs is far the greater since they must, on judgment day, give account to God of the souls of the kings." ⁷⁴ He also says: "When the see of Blessed Peter has decided, no one is allowed to pass judgment on its decision; it may be appealed to from all parts of the world, but from its decision no one can appeal." ⁷⁵ Two of St. Gelasius' successors, St. Symmachus and

⁷¹ Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, p. 101.

⁷² The famous decree *De libris recipiendis*, which at a very early date was attributed to Pope Gelasius, is now generally regarded as not authentic. Its valuable indications about the canon of Scripture and the apocryphal books are still an important evidence of the belief of the Church at that period. Cf. Grisar, *op. cit.*, III, 236 f.; Roux, *Le Pape Gélase*, pp. 169 ff.; *Lib. pont.*, I, cvii, cxiv.

⁷³ Jaffé, *Regesta*, I, 615.

⁷⁴ Labbe, *Conc.*, IV, 1122.

⁷⁵ Jaffé, I, 664. *Neque cuiquam de ejus liceat judicare judicio, si quidem ad illam de qualibet parte canones appellari voluerint, ab ea autem nemo sit appellare permissus.*

St. Hormisdas, would soon have this doctrine of his acclaimed by the whole Catholic Church.

Pope St. Anastasius

Between the death of Gelasius (496) and the coming of Symmachus (498) the Holy See was occupied by Anastasius II, a Roman by birth. To end the schism that separated Constantinople from Rome, he exercised deference to the utmost limits. By this policy he succeeded only in making himself very unpopular with the Romans. An opposition party, perhaps the same group for which Senator Andromachus was spokesman under Pope Gelasius, accepted the rumor that the Pope had died suddenly, overtaken by the judgment of God. The author of the note on Anastasius, inserted in the *Liber pontificalis*, reports this rumor.⁷⁶ Legend seized upon it and added tragic details. Thus the name of Pope Anastasius II, which the Church has placed in her list of saints, comes down to us laden with the poet's curse. Says Dante:

"We drew ourselves aside behind the cover
Of a great tomb, whereon I saw a writing
Which said: 'Pope Anastasius I hold
Whom out of the right way Photinus drew.' " ⁷⁷

Furthermore, in the pontificates of Anastasius' two immediate successors (Symmachus and Hormisdas), the very schemes of the enemies of the papacy provoked two superb glorifications of the papal power, perhaps the most superb ever recorded.

Pope St. Symmachus (498-514)

Anastasius was succeeded by Symmachus (498-514).⁷⁸ Scarcely had he been consecrated in the Lateran Basilica, when

⁷⁶ *Lib. pont.*, I, 258, *qui nutu divino percussus est*.

⁷⁷ *Inferno*, canto II, verses 6-9; Longfellow's trans.

⁷⁸ Son of Fortunatus and native of Sardinia. *Lib. pont.*, I, 260.

an antipope, supported by a Roman faction with a certain Senator Festus at its head, had himself consecrated bishop of Rome in the Basilica of St. Mary Major.⁷⁹ It was the archpriest Lawrence, of whom they hoped to make a pope devoted to the Byzantine emperor and the Monophysite sect.

The attempt failed, at least for the moment. The barbarian King Theodoric, more powerful at Rome than the Eastern emperor, would recognize only the pope chosen by a majority of the electors. Lawrence had to withdraw.

Thereupon the rage of the faction turned against the lawful Pope. False witnesses were suborned, who accused the Pope of imaginary crimes. He was charged with having immoral relations with women, with illegal alienation of Church property, with celebrating Easter contrary to the established regulations of the liturgy. The most elementary rules of Roman legal procedure were violated by having the Pope's own slaves testify against him. The Catholic party, with the approval of the Pope and of King Theodoric, invited the bishops of Italy to meet at Rome for the purpose of ending the conflict. In May, 501, one hundred fifteen bishops convened in the Julian Basilica (Santa Maria in Trastevere). But while Symmachus was on his way to the synod, he was brutally assaulted by members of Festus' party. He barely escaped with his life and had to barricade himself in St. Peter's Basilica. The *Liber pontificalis* and contemporary writings furnish an account of the unprecedented scenes of violence instigated by the senatorial party. Convents were broken into, and the virgins outraged. It was no longer safe for the clergy to appear on the streets of Rome.⁸⁰

In the circumstances the Pope declared that he could not take

⁷⁹ *Loc. cit.*

⁸⁰ *Lib. pont.*, I, 261. *Omni die pugnas contra ecclesiam in media civitate gerebant . . . sanctimoniales mulieres et virgines deponentes de monasteria vel de habitaculis suis, denudantes sexum femineum, coedibus plagarum adflictas vulnerabantur . . . ut nulli esset securitas die vel nocte de clero in civitate ambulare.*

part in the council.⁸¹ Theodoric protested that he was unwilling to make a decision in ecclesiastical matters.⁸² The assembly of bishops was in a critical position. And it was well aware of the fact. The bishops wrote to the King, saying: "It is an unheard-of thing and quite unprecedented that the pontiff of this see should be brought up for trial and judgment."⁸³

Thus the Pope, the King, and the assembly of bishops held the same view. "The case was to be the touchstone of the monarchical organization of the Church."⁸⁴

There seemed no way of solving the problem. Yet a decision had to be made, for the factional fights continued, and the streets of the city ran with blood. A handful of evil-doers, in the pay of the ambitious plotters, were terrorizing the populace, which sided with Symmachus.

The council voted its decision on October 23, 501. Nothing could have been nobler and more worthy. It declared that, "after examining all the details of the case, they judge Pope Symmachus, titular of the Apostolic See, to be free before men of all the charges brought against him." Therefore, so far as concerns the temporalities, by virtue of the powers conferred by King Theodoric, they pronounce the restoration of the Pope in the exercise of all his rights; but, so far as concerns the spiritual authority, they can, out of regard for the supreme authority of the Church, only "leave the whole matter to the judgment of God, urging everyone to return to the communion of Symmachus, begging all to be mindful that God loves peace and wishes to give peace to all men."⁸⁵

⁸¹ For the acts of these synods, see *MGH, auctores antiquiss.*, XII, 416.

⁸² *Quia non nostrum iudicavimus de ecclesiasticis aliquid censere negotiis.* *MGH, auctores antiquiss.*, XII, 424.

⁸³ *Causa nova est, et pontificem sedis istius apud nos audiri nullo constat exemplo* (*ibid.*, p. 423).

⁸⁴ Grisar, *op. cit.*, II, 242.

⁸⁵ *MGH, ibid.*, p. 431. See the decision *in extenso* in *MGH, ibid.*, pp. 426-437.

Either because the decree was published in that place in the Roman Forum which was called *ad palmam*, or because the council was held in a part of St. Peter's atrium called *ad palmata*, the council which made this decision is known as the Palmary Synod.

The principle that the Holy See is subject to no judge, thus triumphed completely at Rome. It was enthusiastically received especially by the bishops of Gaul. At first word of this strange trial, the famous and learned bishop of Vienne, St. Avitus, perhaps having only vague reports of it, was shocked at the thought of a council of bishops preparing to judge a pope. He wrote a stirring letter to Rome, in which he says: "If the authority of the Pope of Rome may be impugned, it is not one bishop, but the whole episcopate which becomes unstable."⁸⁶

In Italy, Ennodius of Pavia wrote an eloquent defense of the Palmary Synod, against the opponents of that council.⁸⁷

This peaceful victory enabled Symmachus to address the Eastern Emperor with greater authority than ever. He said to him: "Compare the dignity of the emperor with that of the head of the Church. Consider, O Emperor, the long list of those who, since the beginning of Christianity, have persecuted the faith. They have perished; but the true religion has shone forth with greater splendor the more it has been oppressed."⁸⁸

But Emperor Anastasius, to whom this letter was addressed, was becoming more and more committed to the Eutychian heresy. The joy of concluding the peace was reserved to the future emperor, Justin I, and the successor of Symmachus, Pope Hormisdas.

⁸⁶ *Si papa Urbis vocatur in dubium, episcopatus jam videbitur, non episcopus, vacillare.* St. Avitus, Letter 31; *PL*, LIX, 249; *MGH*, *ibid.*, VI, 65.

⁸⁷ *PL*, LXIII, 183-208.

⁸⁸ Jaffé, 761.

Pope St. Hormisdas (514-523)

Symmachus died July 19, 514, and his successor Hormisdas was consecrated the next day. The situation at Constantinople had become intolerable. The sectarian spirit of Emperor Anastasius brought about a condition of lawlessness. Some monks who, as Hormisdas said, "were monks only by the habit they wore,"⁸⁹ who lacked the two basic virtues of the religious life, obedience and humility," were terrorizing the countryside. In the lead of these disturbers were the Acephali monks. They were given this name Acephali (ἀκέφαλοι, headless) after deserting their leader Peter Mongus, whom they accused of approving a compromise with the Pope. Opposed to these fanatics were the Acoemetae monks (ἀκοίμητοι, sleepless), so named because of their long vigils. It was one of these Acoemetae who had denounced to the Pope the heresy of Patriarch Acacius. It was one of them who, at the risk of his life, had fastened to Acacius' cloak the sentence of excommunication issued by the sovereign pontiff. In 469 these zealous defenders of the Holy See, led by their abbot, entered the hippodrome, with a concourse of people following them. There they publicly protested against a prince suspected of heresy being raised to the rank of Caesar.⁹⁰ In the heat of the strife they sometimes yielded to the temptation that appeals to the impatience of men of action in time of disturbance: to defend a good cause by the use of the worst methods of its adversaries.⁹¹

⁸⁹ *Epist. ad Possessorem episcopum*, Jaffé, I, 850. In this letter the Pope relates how a group of rebellious monks came to Rome with the intention of coercing the Holy See into granting an approval of one of their errors. He says they stirred up the crowds in the streets, *ad concussionem quietis circa regum etiam statuas in-clamantes*.

⁹⁰ Marin, *Les moines de Constantinople, de Constantin à Photius*; see the words "acémète" and "acéphale" in Vacant's *Dict. de théologie catholique*.

⁹¹ Several Acoemetae monks, in their detestation of the Eutychian heresy, fell into the Nestorian heresy (Hefele, *His. des conciles*, III, 131) and were excommunicated by John II in 534 (Mansi, VIII, 798 f.). See Marin, *op. cit.*

In the time of Hormisdas the great majority of the people of Constantinople, as also the people of Rome under Symmachus, earnestly desired peace. So when, in 519, the news spread that a final union was effected between the see of Constantinople and the see of Rome, between the new Emperor Justin and Pope Hormisdas, by acceptance of the formula of faith proposed by the Supreme Pontiff, it occasioned an unexampled demonstration. We learn the details from the reports of the papal legates.⁹² The people went in procession from the imperial palace to the church. There the papal document was read, in which Nestorius, Eutyches, Acacius, with all their followers and associates, were anathematized, and in which all the letters of Pope Leo the Great were approved. St. Peter, the Pope as the center of unity, and the Emperor as the glorious protector of that unity, were acclaimed with prolonged shouts. The people wept for joy.

Formula of Hormisdas

But the healing of a quarrel that had lasted thirty-five years was not the most important result of that great historic event. By one of those wonderful compensations of Providence, with which the history of the Church abounds, that city of Constantinople, the center of so many plots against Rome, acclaimed, and soon the whole East acclaimed with her, the most perfect formula that had ever been given of the primacy and doctrinal infallibility of the see of Rome.

The formula subscribed by the Patriarch, accepted by the Emperor, and applauded by the people contained these words: "We wish to follow in everything the Apostolic See, in which is the full, true, and perfect solidity of the Christian religion. . . . For the Catholic religion has been preserved ever immaculate in the Apostolic See."⁹³

⁹² For these details, see Mansi, VIII, 453.

⁹³ *Sequentes in omnibus apostolicam Sedem . . . in qua est integra et verax*

Such is the wording of the famous Formula of St. Hormisdas. It was signed by 2,500 Eastern bishops,⁹⁴ and enthusiastically recorded by several Western councils. Popes Agapetus, Nicholas I, and Adrian II appealed to it as to a rule of faith. Bossuet, in his *Defensio declarationis cleri gallicani*, refers to it, Fenelon cites it in opposition to the Jansenists, and the Vatican Council embodied its chief expressions in the decree on the Roman primacy.⁹⁵

Thus it happened that, from so many doctrinal and disciplinary disputes, the papal authority emerged strengthened and enlarged. At the same time a concurrence of providential events resulted in the gradual formation, to the advantage of the Holy See, of a temporal domain, the guaranty of its spiritual authority. It was an Eastern emperor, Justinian, successor of so many potentates who had opposed Rome, who gave this temporal power of the Church its first general and official sanction.

Patrimony of St. Peter

From the very beginning, the confidence of the faithful prompted them to place generous alms in the hands of the popes, for use in works of charity. Under the liberal legislation inaugurated by Constantine, these offerings enabled the supreme pontiffs to acquire, with a view to their diverse undertakings, important domains at Rome, in Italy, in Sicily, and in Sardinia. These were called the patrimonies of the Holy See.

christianae religionis et perfecta soliditas. . . . Quia in Sede apostolica immaculata est semper servata Catholica religio. See the full Latin text in Mansi, VIII, 451; *PL*, LXIII, 444; and Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, no. 171.

⁹⁴ This is the figure given by the deacon Rusticus, who wrote in the time of Justinian. Rusticus, *Contra Acephalos disputatio*; *PL*, LXVII, 1251.

⁹⁵ Pope Hormisdas, so firm on principles, was tolerant to persons. Many of the opposing party had been in good faith. Some Christians who died during the schism and in the Acacian Schism have been canonized. Such were St. Flavian of Constantinople and St. Elias of Jerusalem. Cf. Thomassin, *Dissert. XVI in Synod.*

Even as early as the fifth century the bishop of Rome was probably the wealthiest landowner of Italy.⁹⁶

Moreover, amid the barbarian invasions the popes, like most of the bishops, came to be invested with the duties of *defensores civitatis*. The functions of the *defensor*, pertaining to the judicial and the administrative order, were very extensive.⁹⁷ The powers of the lay *defensores* were lessened in the sixth century. But the same was not true in the case of ecclesiastical *defensores*. The Eastern emperors, who had not given up their claims to the suzerainty of Rome and the whole West, and for whom Odoacer and Theodoric were merely lieutenants, were resolved to exercise their authority there directly. But soon they saw that no intermediary could be more useful for them than the bishop of Rome: he alone possessed sufficient moral authority to keep mutinous subjects at peace; to him alone could be entrusted the management of the public funds, which an imperial officer might squander. Finally, the pope had become not only the richest landowner of Italy, but the greatest social and political authority in Italy.

To organize the temporal administration of the papal domain had been the major concern of the great Pope Gelasius. We know from John the Deacon that the farm and tax lists drawn up by Gelasius were still in use under Gregory the Great for the administration of the patrimonies.⁹⁸ His writings and the extant documents of his chancery enable us to note the great efforts of this pontiff to safeguard what he calls the patrimony of the poor.⁹⁹ But his successors had not the means to pursue his work. Symmachus and Hormisdas were absorbed by the higher and more pressing question of the disciplinary

⁹⁶ Diehl in Schrader's *Atlas historique*, explanation of map 16, "L'Église au temps de saint Grégoire le Grand."

⁹⁷ Daremberg and Saglio, *Dict. des antiquités grecques et romaines*, under the word "defensor civitatis." Chénon, "Études historiques sur le Defensor civitatis" in the *Nouvelle revue historique de droit français et étranger*, 1889, pp. 551 ff.

⁹⁸ John the Deacon, *Life of St. Gregory the Great*, Bk. II, chap. 24; *PL*, LXXV, 97.

⁹⁹ Jaffé, I, 684.

and doctrinal primacy of the Holy See. The pontificates of the five popes who occupied the Roman See between 523 and 536 (John I, Felix IV, Boniface II, John II, and Agapetus) were disturbed by Theodoric's persecution, which we shall speak of later on. The pontificates of Silverius and Vigilius¹⁰⁰ were too much disturbed by the Eastern disputes to allow the Holy See to resume the work of organization undertaken by St. Gelasius.

Emperor Justinian, under the influence of his wife, the scheming Theodora, revived the Monophysite quarrel by stirring up the question of the Three Chapters. Empress Theodora was a clever, intelligent woman; but she sought to subordinate the religious questions to her venturesome political ideas. She persuaded Justinian that the powerful political party of the Monophysites of Arabia could easily be rallied to the Empire, if they were given a token of good will. That token was the condemnation of the three ecclesiastical writers who had attacked Monophysitism, while inclining to Nestorianism: Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Ibas. The condemnation of the doctrine of these three men, which was called the condemnation of the Three Chapters, was not fundamentally heterodoxical, since the three accused writers had maintained erroneous opinions. What vitiated this condemnation, however, was that it was issued by an altogether incompetent authority. Pope Vigilius was not a man of determination. In consequence of certain intrigues, he had the weakness to subscribe to the anathema of the Three Chapters at the request of the Emperor. True, he retracted and suffered a grievous expiation for his fault. Although the events amid which Vigilius had to govern the Church offer attenuating circumstances and although he safeguarded his orthodoxy by certain reservations,¹⁰¹ yet his conduct must be blamed. But it

¹⁰⁰ Silverius was born in Campania. His father was Pope Hormisdas, who was married before he received holy orders. (*Lib. pont.*, I, 290.) Vigilius was a Roman, the son of the consul John. (*Lib. pont.*, I, 296.)

¹⁰¹ In approving the condemnation, Pope Vigilius added: *Salva in omnibus*

would be highly unjust to draw from his action an argument against the infallibility of the pope.¹⁰²

The Pragmatic Sanction

In 554, during the pontificate of this same Pope, Emperor Justinian, that strange monarch whose policies, as also his private life, were made up of contrasts, published his Pragmatic Sanction, which confirmed and considerably increased the temporal power of the popes. Henceforth the bishop of Rome had a say in the appointment of the administrators of the provinces, received their oath of office, inspected the performance of the instructions they received when entering into office.¹⁰³ In case of their transfer, he had the right to audit their accounts; in case of their dismissal, he had, for a period of fifty days, the right to cite them before his tribunal on charges of corruption in office.¹⁰⁴ Along with three citizens he had charge of all the municipal affairs, such as the maintenance of the baths, aqueducts, bridges, and walls, as also the inspection of the prisons and markets.¹⁰⁵ On a day of combat he must be the first upon the ramparts. Henceforth he was the legal protector of each and every one against the demands of the soldiers, the vexations of the Treasury, and the fraudulent practices of judges.¹⁰⁶

Pope Pelagius I (556–561)

The next pope was Pelagius I. His experience in political and administrative affairs prepared him for the delicate task

reverentia Synodi Chalcedonensis. Says Duchesne: "These reservations were so clear and exact that no Monophysite could sign them without thus making a complete abjuration." *Revue des questions historiques*, 1884, p. 406. Cf. Grisar. *op. cit.*, I, 163 ff.

¹⁰² Döllinger, writing under the pseudonym Janus, did so in his pamphlet *The Pope and the Council*, p. 59.

¹⁰³ *Novellae* 149, c. 1; 8, c. 14; 17, c. 16.

¹⁰⁴ *Op. cit.*, 128, c. 24; 8, c. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Code, *De episcopali audientia*, 22, 25, 26.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 18, 26; *Novella* 8.

of profiting by this favorable legislation of the Byzantine Emperor.¹⁰⁷ Says Grisar:

His Regests indeed afford us an insight into a singularly strenuous life. A glance at his letters shows us how Pelagius intervened in the regular administration of justice, and, for instance, removed cases in which the clergy or the monasteries were concerned, from the secular tribunals of Italy and set them to be tried by his bishops; how he called in the secular arm against usurping or unruly bishops, demanding, at the same time, the presence of a few clerics, in order that "the military may not appear to be acting alone."

In some of this Pope's letters a strong secular element is noticeable. This was called for by the particular risks of the period; especially when it became necessary to put in order the property and revenues of the Roman See. Pelagius displayed a prudence which overlooked nothing.¹⁰⁸

In one of the zealous Pontiff's letters we see the real motive of so great watchfulness. The question concerns the *res pauperum* and, to safeguard the "goods of the poor," no pains are to be spared.¹⁰⁹ Pelagius must be considered the principal organizer of the temporal administration of the papal domain.

Under his three successors (John III, Benedict I, and Pelagius II)¹¹⁰ the Lombard invasions, more terrible than those of the Heruli or the Ostrogoths, permitted attention to be given only the most urgent matters in the administration of the papal lands. But the development of the temporal power of the popes was not so much their personal work as it was the result of providential events. The very disturbances we have just mentioned brought out the great ascendancy of the popes, gave them opportunities to act as arbitrators in the most acute conflicts, and thus contributed to the increase of their sovereign

¹⁰⁷ Pelagius was born in Rome. He belonged to a family of the aristocracy. Procopius, *De bello gothico*, III, 16, 17, 20, 21; *Lib. pont.*, I, 304.

¹⁰⁸ Grisar, *op. cit.*, III, 54.

¹⁰⁹ Mansi, IV, 736.

¹¹⁰ John III, Benedict I, and Pelagius II were Romans. *Lib. pont.*, I, 305, 308 f.

prestige, even in the social and political order. "The popes now become the real masters of Rome."¹¹¹ And so, when Pelagius II's successor, St. Gregory the Great, is elected pope, he is alarmed at seeing himself burdened with so many external affairs, so many political and social cares. "I wonder," he wrote, "whether being pope at this time is to be a spiritual head or a temporal king."¹¹²

The social life of the papacy was indeed beginning, the Middle Ages were opening. We can understand the holy Pontiff's fright at sight of his great and heavy mission. But, for the performance of his task, the new Pope found at his side new workers, prepared by Providence; they were the monastic family to which he himself had belonged, the spiritual sons of St. Benedict. They play an important part in the history of the period we are about to consider.

The Monks of the West

In 480, four years after the fall of the Roman Empire, there was born at Nursia in Campania one whose work was destined to exercise a great influence. We read in the words of his saintly biographer :

There was a man of venerable life, blessed by grace and blessed in name, for he was called Benedictus : who, from his younger years, carried the mind of an old man ; for his age was inferior to his virtue : all vain pleasure he contemned. . . . He was born in the province of Nursia, of honorable parentage, and brought up at Rome in the study of humanity. But for as much as he saw many by reason of such learning to fall to dissolute and lewd life, he drew back his foot, which he had as it were now set forth into the world.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Lavissee and Rambaud, *Histoire générale*, I, 231.

¹¹² St. Gregory the Great, *Epistolae*, Bk. I, ep. 25; *PL*, LXXVII, 476. *Hoc in loco quisquis pastor dicitur curis exterioribus graviter occupatur, ita ut saepe incertum fiat, utrum pastoris officium an terreni proceris agat. MGH, Reg.*, I, 24; p. 35.

¹¹³ St. Gregory, *Dial.*, Bk. II, preface.

Forty miles from Rome, beyond Tivoli, in those gorges where the foaming Anio flows, overlooking the desolate ruins of an old imperial villa built by Nero, the young man found a solitary grotto. "With a resolute mind only to serve God, he sought for some place where he might attain to the desire of his holy purpose."¹¹⁴ This solitary spot was called Subiacum. Today the devout traveler who visits the Sacro Speco of Subiaco is moved no less by the mighty memories connected with the place than by the picturesque and wild beauty of this venerated corner of the earth.

When a soul full of God seeks to flee from the world, other souls sometimes come to it, attracted by the virtues that are the more radiant as they are more interior. The stylites of the East saw flocking to the foot of their pillars throngs of pilgrims, sometimes people of the highest worldly station, who came to seek edification from the sight of those austerities or to ask for guidance. The first who felt Benedict's influence were some poor shepherds. "At the first when they espied him through the bushes, they verily thought that it had been some beast: but after they were acquainted with the servant of God, many of them were by his means converted from their beastly life to grace, piety, and devotion."¹¹⁵ Finally a few individuals placed themselves under his guidance. Shortly afterward "a certain Goth, poor of spirit, that gave over the world, was received by the man of God."¹¹⁶ Barbarians and Latins mingled together under the guidance of the holy patriarch. Before long, near his grotto, he founded twelve monasteries, with twelve monks in each. "At another time also many noble and religious men of Rome came unto him and committed their children to be brought up under him for the service of God. Then also

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, Bk. II, chap. I.

¹¹⁶ *Alio quoque tempore Gothus quidam pauper spiritu ad conversionem venit. Dial.*, Bk. II, chap. 6. *Conversio* means entrance into the monastic life.

Evitius delivered him Maurus, and Tertullius the Senator brought Placidus, being their sons.”¹¹⁷

Maurus later established Benedictine monasticism in France, and Placidus in Italy.

But the chanting of the divine praises was not heard very long near the Neronian villa and ancient Tivoli. The spirit of evil, that continued to pursue the servant of God, stirred up against him the priest Florentius, who spread so many calumnies about the young community that St. Benedict thought it well to leave the locality.

He moved to the side of the magnificent mountain which dominates the little town of Castrum Cassinum, whence the view spreads over that rich Campanian Plain which the Italians now call Terra di Lavoro. The old paganism, that no longer had any legal existence in the Roman Empire, had there found a secret refuge. Within the confines of an old Pelasgic colony, with its Cyclopean walls made of great rough-hewn blocks, piled one upon the other forming a sort of colossal fortress, “there was an ancient chapel in which the foolish and simple country people worshiped the god Apollo Pitosyrus, the Sun-god. Round about it likewise upon all sides there were groves for demon worship.”¹¹⁸

Was the saint attracted by the majestic beauty of the site, by a desire to purify one of the last retreats of the expiring paganism, or by some mysterious voice in which he recognized the divine call? All we know, from his biographer, is that “the man of God coming thither, beat in pieces the idol, overthrew the altar, set fire on the woods, and in the temple of Apollo he built the oratory of St. Martin and, where the altar of the same Apollo was, he made an oratory of St. John: and

¹¹⁷ *Dial.*, Bk. II, chap. 3.

¹¹⁸ *Dial.*, Bk. II, chap. 8. *Ubi vetustissimum fanum fuit, in quo, ex antiquorum more gentilium, a stulto rusticorum populo Apollo colebatur. Circumquaque etiam in cultu daemonum luci succreverunt.*

by his continual preaching he brought the people dwelling in those parts to embrace the faith of Christ.”¹¹⁹ But, says St. Gregory, “the old enemy of mankind, not taking this in good part, did in open sight present himself to the eyes of the holy father and appeared visibly unto him most fell and cruel.”¹²⁰

There it was, upon those serene heights and upon the ruins of the false god of light, that Benedict drew up the wonderful Rule which, until the thirteenth century, almost alone would govern the monastic life in the West. The saint did not think he was producing a new work, nor did he purpose doing so. Again and again he refers to St. Basil, whom he calls his father; he takes maxims from Cassian; he appeals to the rules that were in use in the good monasteries of his time. In fact, the monastic life was flourishing, even in the western part of the Empire, before St. Benedict. St. Martin at Ligugé, St. Honoratus at Lerins, and St. Cassian at Marseilles had but recently offered fine examples of it. Yet it is St. Benedict who must be regarded as the father of Western monks, and his work must be considered a new creation.

Basil and Cassian gave general maxims, enlightening views emanating from the soul of the saints, aphorisms that summarized long experience. But what St. Benedict drew up was a veritable code of laws. Previous to him, the purity of the religious spirit in a monastery depended largely upon the personal influence of a holy abbot. The Benedictine Rule was so firm and pliable that by itself it sustained the religious life and bound together as in a common soul all the monasteries of the West. Especially did it penetrate the synthesis of the ancient rules with an evangelical spirit so pure that we can feel a breath of life and invigoration pass into all the monasteries where it was introduced. A finished model of discretion, of moderation, and of clearness, it appears, even to those least

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

inclined to favor it, as one of the most perfect masterpieces of Roman wisdom inspired by the Christian spirit.

In the very first lines of its prologue we feel ourselves breathing a pure, luminous air, like that which blows on the slope of Monte Cassino.

Says the holy patriarch:

Hearken continually within thine heart, O son, giving attentive ear to the precepts of thy master. Understand with willing mind and effectually fulfil thy holy father's admonition; that thou mayest return by the labor of obedience, to Him from whom, by the idleness of disobedience, thou hadst withdrawn. . . . Let us with astonished ears listen to the admonition of God's voice daily crying out and saying: Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.¹²¹

Such is the beginning of that famous Rule. Bossuet says of it that "it is a summary of Christianity, a learned and mysterious abridgment of the whole teaching of the Gospel, of all the institutions of the holy fathers, of all the counsels of perfection. Therein appear prudence and simplicity, humility and courage, strictness and gentleness, freedom and submission; therein correction possesses its full firmness, condescension its full attractiveness, command its vigor and subjection its restfulness, silence its gravity and speech its grace, strength its exercise and weakness its support."¹²²

According to this Rule the abbot, mindful of his title (*ab-bas*, father), should exercise a wholly fatherly authority. He should never undertake anything of importance without first consulting his brethren. The principal virtues of the Benedictine monk are to be obedience, silence, and humility. His chief duties are to be the recitation of the divine office, the education of youth, reading, and manual labor. At the end of a certain period of probation, the monk is to make a promise of stability

¹²¹ *Rule of St. Benedict*, prologue.

¹²² Bossuet, *Panégryrique de saint Benoît*.

in his monastery. The habit may vary according to differences of country and climate.

This Rule, which, at least in Europe, would gradually absorb not only the rules of the Eastern monks, but also the Rule of St. Columban, was remarkably suited to the work which the Church had to undertake in the midst of the barbarian world. By the suppleness of its organization, the Benedictine Order was marvelously adapted to the missionary rôle which its monks soon began to fill in France, England, Germany, and the most remote countries. By the grouping of its members in monasteries permanently established upon the soil, which the monks would cultivate, it would give the barbarian world lessons of stability and labor. Its work of teaching would produce the monastic schools. But especially, for those races perpetually agitated by migrations and wars, it would give, through the example of its monks, the taste for and habit of that deeper and more fruitful life, which the holy patriarch, from the outset, made the rule of his own life and which he set forth to his disciples as the essential aim of the religious life, namely, the interior life or, as he himself said, "life with oneself in the sight of God."

Very likely many persons of that time and perhaps many a novice upon entering the monastery, may have asked the abbot the question which St. Gregory the Great places on the lips of the deacon Peter. Says Peter: "I understand not very well what you mean, when you say that he dwelt with himself." To this Gregory replies: "So often as we are carried too far from ourselves, we remain the same men that we were before and yet be not with ourselves as we were before: because we are wondering about other men's affairs, little considering and looking into the state of our own soul. . . . I said that this venerable man did dwell with himself, because carrying himself circumspectly and carefully in the sight of his Creator,

never did he turn the eyes of his soul away from himself, to behold aught else whatsoever.”¹²³

The barbarian world would finally understand this lesson. The Middle Ages would be not only the epoch of Charlemagne and Godfrey of Bouillon, but also the age of St. Bruno and of the author of the *Imitation of Christ*. A great mystical current flows through it, nourishing all the knightly heroisms. And that current will be spread in the world especially by the monks.

¹²³ St. Gregory, *Dial.*, Bk. II, chap. 3.

CHAPTER II

St. Gregory the Great (590-604)

UPON the death of Pelagius II, the Roman people, senate, and clergy elected as his successor a disciple of St. Benedict. The deacon Gregory, who for fourteen years would bear the responsibility of governing the Church, was a frail monk, worn out by the austerities of the cloister,¹ but animated by the fervor of the monastic spirit which had been instilled by the holy patriarch of the monks of the West.

In Gregory that spirit was combined with a veneration for the old Roman traditions, which he received from his ancestors. He was descended from the *gens Anicia*, one of the oldest and most illustrious senatorial families, and numbered among his forebears a pope, St. Felix IV.² His father, the senator Gordianus, who was a man of considerable wealth, owned extensive estates in several provinces of Italy and Sicily. After holding various high offices in Rome, Gregory's father entered the ranks of the clergy and at his death was one of the seven deacons having the care of the poor and the hospitals in Rome. Gregory's mother, Silvia, was a gentle, devout woman; she withdrew to a little oratory and there ended her days in practices of piety and charity. The Church honors her on November 3. Gregory's aunts St. Trasilla (Tharsilla) and St. Emiliania are praised in his homilies and his *Dialogues*. Thus did holiness, mingled with the last splendor of Roman greatness, watch over his cradle.

¹ See St. Gregory's own statements in several of his letters and in the prologue of his *Book of Morals*, *Fortasse hoc divinae Providentiae consilium fuit, ut percussus Job percussus exponerem*. Throughout his pontificate St. Gregory was often obliged to remain in bed for part of the day. Several times he almost died.

² Tillemont, *Mémoires*, XVI, 339.

St. Gregory the Great is one of the most important personages of history. Both by his noble birth and by his character he is the last representative of the ancient world; by the nature and significance of his work he must be regarded as the founder of the Middle Ages. Being successively prefect of the city of Rome, Benedictine monk, ambassador to the court of Constantinople, and head of the universal Church, he had experience of the most varied environments. To picture these, while narrating the story of his life, is to depict the figure of a great saint and to describe the spectacle of a decisive period in the life of the Church.

Condition of Rome

We do not know the exact date of Gregory's birth. It cannot be earlier than 540.³ His childhood must have witnessed the most lamentable scenes. Within the space of sixteen years (536–552) Rome was taken and retaken six times, and all the sieges experienced by that city were the occasion of numberless calamities. Gregory, in his *Dialogues*, relates some of the incidents. In 537, Vitiges, while besieging the city, massacred the senators whom he was holding as hostages. Later Totila removed to the fortresses of Campania a large number of the survivors. The Greeks, who were the natural protectors of Rome, were at times as cruel as the barbarians. We see the commanding officer of the imperial garrison seize the food supplies and sell them at a high price to the starving people.⁴ But the atrocities of the Goths and Byzantines were surpassed by those of the Lombards. St. Gregory's *Dialogues* tell of forty prisoners who were massacred because they refused to adore a goat's head consecrated to the devil, and of certain

³ By 546 he must have reached the age of discernment, because he retained the memory of Totila's terrible siege of Rome, which he relates in his *Dialogues*, Bk. III, chap. 11.

⁴ Muratori, *Scriptores rerum italicarum*, Vol. I. Procopius, III, 22.

brave peasants who were seized by the Lombards and, upon their refusal to eat food that had been sacrificed to idols, were likewise put to death.⁵ For Gregory's devout soul the height of these calamities was probably the destruction of the monastery of Monte Cassino, which was invaded at night by the Lombards and sacked from top to bottom. At any rate the monks were able to escape, carrying off with them the book of their holy Rule, some articles of furniture, and a few manuscripts.⁶ The impression which these events left in the mind of the young patrician must have given him a disgust for things of this world and a deep-seated sadness, which transpire in his homilies, his letters, and all his writings, and which only his solid piety prevented from becoming discouragement.

Possibly Gregory was not present at all the disasters that took place in Rome. There is evidence that his father, along with the other members of the family, for some years withdrew to his estates in Sicily. In that event the boy, while passing through Italy, could see to what a deplorable state it had been reduced by the invasions: the ravages committed by the Franks when they came down from the Alps in 554, the plague that spread from Liguria to all the provinces, the peasants starving to death in their huts, wolves and other wild beasts coming down from the mountains and invading the cities, all work at a standstill, the villages deserted. As Paul the Deacon says, "you might see the world brought back to its ancient silence."⁷ Then, amid this terrifying solitude, the few survivors, deranged by their sufferings, thinking they heard in the clouds the sound of the heavenly trumpets and the sound of a marching army. The *Dialogues* preserve a naïve and vivid picture of these popular terrors.

Gregory must have been 12 or 14 years old when the im-

⁵ *Dial.*, Bk. III, chaps. 27, 28.

⁶ *Dial.*, Bk. II, chap. 17.

⁷ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards*, Bk. II, chap. 4 (p. 57) ; *PL*, XCV, 480.

perial power was re-established at Rome. Again he was living in the family palace on the Coelian Hill. From there he could gaze upon the superb sight of those last monuments of Roman grandeur, which the barbarians' hasty greed, in a hurry to grab the small works of art and anything made of gold or silver, was obliged to leave unharmed. Opposite his father's palace was the septizonium of Severus with its three rows of columns of precious marbles; all about there stood an amazing multitude of statues and in their midst murmured the waters of monumental fountains; in the background arose the magnificent palace of the Caesars, the ruins of which even today form the most striking ornament of the Palatine. And the eye could take in, to right and left, like a frame to this picture, the triumphal arches of the Circus Maximus, the lofty arcades of the Claudian aqueduct straddling the Via Triumphalis, Constantine's arch, and the great Flavian amphitheater.⁸ These reminders of imperial Rome never left Gregory's memory. When he sees their prestige vanish, he wonders whether the whole world is not going to disappear and undergo the last judgment.

Intellectual culture, interrupted for a time, returned to favor in Rome. In the Forum, near the Gordian palace, Virgil was again being read, and even Christian poetry tried to praise the greatness of the new Rome in verses which the Senate honored with public reward.⁹ The schools of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics were reopened. Gregory attended them. There, according to John the Deacon, he won brilliant success. It is likely that Gregory never learned Greek very well; he even seems to pride himself on not knowing it at all, after six years spent in Constantinople; but we may suppose he disdained learning it and declined to speak it because it was the language

⁸ On the topography of Rome at this period, see Grisar, Bk. I, chap. 4, "Roman Buildings: their Alleged Destruction by the Barbarians"; and chap. 5, "The So-called Wonders of Rome."

⁹ Fortunatus, *Carmina*, III, 20; VI, 8.

of the Byzantine masters.¹⁰ But he was glad to take up the study of law, which the famous collections of Emperor Justinian, the Institutes, the Code, and the Novellae, raised to a position of honor. In 554 a pragmatic sanction of the Emperor made obligatory in Italy the teaching of law according to the new collections.¹¹ Gregory must have attended the public schools, where capable jurisconsults endeavored to revive the splendor of the ancient private schools of Labeo, Sabinus, Paulus, and Ulpian. These law studies were agreeable to a mind gifted with firm logic and good sense, as Gregory's was. In those studies he also found a means of more securely defending the rights of those whom religion commanded him to call his brethren, at a period when justice and equity were so often trampled under foot. But his special predilection was for religious studies. In his writings, although it is evident he was acquainted with Stoicism¹² and was not a stranger to Plato,¹³ we see that, as he himself says, "he assiduously drank of those deep and clear waters that come from the blessed Ambrose and the blessed Augustine."¹⁴

For a while the young patrician hesitated about his vocation. He was not seduced by the spirit of the world, but was influenced by a desire to be useful to his fellow-citizens in the ranks of the government officials, where his ancestors had rendered so great services.¹⁵ From Emperor Justin II he accepted, in 574, the office of praetor or rather prefect of Rome.¹⁶

¹⁰ *Nos nec graece novimus, nec aliquod opus aliquando graece conscripsimus. Epist.* XI, 74; *PL*, LXXVII, 1213; *MGH, Reg.*, XI, 55. But in his works St. Gregory sometimes quotes Greek words and translates them.

¹¹ Ortolan, *Explication historique des Institutes de Justinien*, I, 498.

¹² *Book of Morals*, II, 16; *PL*, LXXV, 569.

¹³ Bk. III, ep. 54; *PL*, LXXVII, 649; *MGH, Reg.*, III, 65.

¹⁴ *De beatorum patrum Ambrosii et Augustini torrentibus profunda ac perspicua fluenta assidue bibere*. Homilies on Ezech., preface; *PL*, LXXVI, 785.

¹⁵ *Morals*, prologue, chap. 1; *PL*, LXXV, 511.

¹⁶ St. Gregory's *Registrum* (IV, 2) has the words *urbanam praeturam gerens*. The same expression is used in John the Deacon (I, 3). But the city praetorship no longer existed in the fifth century. Perhaps what was meant was the praetorship of the

The *praefectus urbis* possessed all the administrative and judicial powers in the city of Rome. But he did not exercise military authority; under the Lower Empire that jurisdiction belonged to the *dux* and the other officers of the *exercitus romanus*.¹⁷

Notwithstanding the increase of power given to the head of the imperial army, the *praefectus urbis*, even as late as the eighth century, in the time of Adrian I, possessed criminal jurisdiction. It is mentioned in the *Liber pontificalis*.¹⁸ In the sixth century the prefect of the city was, therefore, beyond question the chief government official of Rome, and his powers were very extensive.

We have no information regarding Gregory's administration of this office. But we may surmise that, having a hand in all the important affairs of the city and charged with supervising all the works of charity required by the misfortunes of that period, he found in his official duties a providential initiation for the difficult pontificate which God intended for him. We like to imagine him passing through various parts of the city, wearing the robes adorned with gold and gems spoken of by his contemporary Gregory of Tours,¹⁹ yet jealously preserving in his heart that treasure of interior life which was the matter of greatest moment for his soul; and perhaps a certain passage in his *Book of Morals*²⁰ contains a recollection of this period of his life. As we are told by Gregory of Tours, one day

people, *praetura plebis*, instituted by the *Novella XIII* of September 16, 535, or perhaps the vicariate of the city of Rome, because Cassiodorus speaks of a *vicarius urbis Romae* existing at that time (*Variae*, VI). It is more likely that the reference is to the prefectship of Rome, and that we should prefer the reading in one MS, *praefectura*, instead of *praetura*.

¹⁷ Cf. Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, I, 515 note 12.

¹⁸ *Lib. pont.*, I, 490.

¹⁹ St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, Bk. X, chap. 1 (p. 425); Paul the Deacon, *Life of St. Gregory the Great*, chap. 4; *PL*, LXXV, 43.

²⁰ *Si vero prematur aliquis corporaliter popularibus turbis et tamen nullos curarum saecularium tumultus in corde patiatur, non est in urbe. Morals*, XXX, 16; *PL*, LXXVI, 553.

the prefect of Rome changed his rich dress for the coarse clothes worn by the rustic peasantry, the habit which had been adopted by the sons of St. Benedict. Gregory turned his palace on the Coelian Hill into a monastery, and placed it under the patronage of St. Andrew. In Sicily he founded six monasteries on his family estates, endowed them out of his own resources, and gave the rest of his wealth to works of charity.

Vocations of this sort were not unheard-of in the city of Rome at that period. Men could still remember seeing, on the Aventine, the scions of the greatest Roman families gathered about St. Jerome and there following a life of prayer and poverty. Even more recently the noblewoman Galla, whose father and husband had been consuls, after her husband's death withdrew to a convent near St. Peter's Basilica; and the virgin Proba, who, like Gregory, belonged to the Anicii family, like him gave her wealth to the poor and entered a convent. An illustrious personage of the time, Cassiodorus, after directing the affairs of the Ostrogoth kingdom as Theodoric's minister, withdrew to his Vivarium estate in Campania and there followed a life of labor and prayer in company with a few disciples. It may be that all these great souls were prompted, amidst the disturbances and decline of the ancient world, by a desire to safeguard the purity of their spiritual life; but thereby they were conserving in themselves, for the future, the germ that would give vitality to a new world.

The deed of Gregory's gift of his family palace to the Benedictine monks has been preserved. It bears the date of the year 587. Therein Gregory calls himself "servant of the servants of God." This title he kept when, three years later, he was raised to the papacy. This same humble title he used in contrast with the pompous title of "ecumenical (universal) patriarch" assumed by the patriarch of Constantinople. And it was afterwards adopted habitually by the sovereign pontiffs.

St. Gregory's *Dialogues*

We know but few details about St. Gregory's life as *prae-fectus urbis*. And we are equally uninformed regarding his monastic life. It was in that life of peace and calm that he met several monks who had known St. Benedict. He mentions by name four of them, who told him what they knew of the holy patriarch, either personally or by hearsay. The new monk eagerly collected these sincere narratives and set them forth in his *Dialogues* with unsurpassed grace and freshness.²¹ Though not at all questioning the pious author's honesty, modern criticism charges him with unsuspecting credulity. The old monks, who used to relate to their younger brethren whatever they had seen or heard reported about their blessed father, no doubt were fond of accumulating the most marvelous stories without always investigating the sources. But, as with the *fiorretti* of the followers of St. Francis of Assisi, even though many of the stories are legendary, there breathes from them the spirit of piety, mildness, and serene wisdom inspired by St. Benedict. They impress us as the accounts of a life abounding with the supernatural and the miraculous. The occasional embellishments added by filial piety do not lead us to doubt the historical reality. How charming is St. Gregory's story of St. Maurus walking on the water! He says:

On a certain day, as venerable Bennet was in his cell, the foresaid young Placidus, the holy man's monk, went out to take up water at the lake, and putting down his pail carelessly, fell in himself after it, whom the water forthwith carried away from the land so far as one may shoot an arrow. The man of God, being in his cell, by and by knew this, and called in haste for Maurus, saying: "Brother Maurus, run as fast as you can, for Placidus, that went to the lake to fetch water, is fallen in, and is carried a good way off." A strange thing, and since the time of Peter the Apostle, never heard of. Maurus, craving

²¹ The life of St. Benedict makes up Book II of the *Dialogues*.

his father's blessing, and departing in all haste, at his commandment, ran to that place upon the water, to which the young lad was carried by force thereof, thinking that he had all that while gone upon the land : and taking fast hold of him by the hair of his head, in all haste returned back again : and so soon as he was at land, coming to himself he looked behind him, and then knew very well that he had before run upon the water : and that which before he durst not have presumed, being now done and past, he both marvelled, and was afraid at that which he had done. Coming back to the father and telling him what had happened, the venerable man did not attribute this to his own merits, but to the obedience of Maurus ; but Maurus on the contrary, said that it was done only upon his commandment, and that he had nothing to do in that miracle, not knowing at that time what he did. But the friendly contention proceeding of mutual humility, the young youth himself that was saved from drowning did determine ; for he said that he saw, when he was drawn out of the water, the Abbot's garment upon his head, affirming that it was he that had delivered him from that great danger.²²

Says Bossuet : "To what shall I attribute so great a miracle? We can answer that obedience carries with it the grace to accomplish what is commanded, and that the command carries with it the grace to make obedience effective."²³

A moral lesson, a lesson of labor, is taught by the chapter entitled : "Regarding the iron part of a tool that returned to his use from the depth of the water."

At another time a certain Goth, poor of spirit, that gave over the world, was received by the man of God ; whom on a day he commanded to take a bill, and to cleanse a certain plot of ground from briars for the making of a garden, which ground was by the side of a lake. The Goth as he was there laboring, by chance the head of the bill slipped off, and fell into the water, which was so deep that there was no hope ever to get it again. The poor Goth, in great fear, ran unto Maurus and told him what he had lost, confessing his own fault and negligence.

²² *Dial.*, Bk. II, chap. 7.

²³ Bossuet, *Panégérique de saint Benoît*.

Maurus forthwith went to the servant of God, giving him to understand thereof, who came straightways to the lake, and took the handle out of the Goth's hand, and put it into the water, and the iron head by and by ascended from the bottom, and entered again into the handle of the bill, which he delivered to the Goth, saying: "Behold here is thy bill again, work on, and be sad no more."²⁴

Incident of the English Slaves

It was in these early days of St. Gregory's monastic life that occurred the touching incident related in almost identical words by Paul the Deacon, John the Deacon, and Venerable Bede. Gregory was crossing the Forum. He noticed there some young slaves that were being sold. Their tender, pure beauty moved him greatly. He asked whence they came. He was told they were Angles. "Angles?" he replied; "Say rather angels. What a pity it is that the grace of God does not dwell within those beautiful brows!" We are told that the monk bought these young slaves, housed them in his monastery, instructed them in the Christian religion, and wished then to take them with him to preach the Gospel to their fellow-countrymen. But the people of Rome, upon learning of Gregory's departure for Britain, set out in pursuit of him and forced him to turn back.

Criticism has raised doubts as to the historical genuineness of this story. The three historians who record it depended evidently, we are told, upon an earlier account, recently discovered at St. Gall and published, in part, in 1886. But the author of the story, probably a Northumbrian monk who wrote at the beginning of the eighth century, evinces a complete lack of criticism and even avows so candidly. "I am not sure," he says, "of all the facts I relate. It might be that such or such a miracle is

²⁴ *Dial.*, Bk. II, chap. 6. The *Dialogues* were not written until about 593, but St. Gregory composed them according to the recollections of the early days of his monastic life. Probably he merely put in writing the accounts which he had often repeated orally.

not St. Gregory's. It may be that of some other saint. This however matters little. The saints form a single body, and what is said of one can be said of the others."²⁵ Such a declaration reveals a disposition of mind which may have been common to many biographers of that time.²⁶ Moreover the account goes on with details that have the mark of legendary embellishments.²⁷ But the detail related in the narrative is substantially so conformable to what we otherwise know about St. Gregory's fondness for the little slaves of the kingdom of the Angles,²⁸ it so well agrees with his smiling good nature prompt in action, that it would seem to us rash to doubt its substantial genuineness.²⁹

St. Gregory's Monastic Life

St. Gregory himself in his *Dialogues*, though not furnishing any precise detail regarding that period of his life, gives us a wonderful description of his state of soul at that time. He says: "I remember with sorrow what I once was in the

²⁵ *Civiltà cattolica*, V (1890), 31. Ewald, *Hist. Aufsätze dem Andenken an G. Waitz*, pp. 25, 38.

²⁶ Delehaye, *Les légendes hagiographiques*, pp. 29-41.

²⁷ The narrator, gratified with the first play on words, keeps adding to it. And it becomes more and more artificial.

"From what country do you come?" Gregory asks.

"From Deira."

"You will be freed from the *Dei ira* (wrath of God). And what is the name of your king?"

"Oella."

"Alleluia? The praises of God will be sung in his kingdom."

When Gregory, in flight, is overtaken by the throng that wishes to bring him back to Rome, he meets a butterfly (in Latin, *locusta*). "*Locusta!*" he exclaims, "*in loca sta!* Let us stop right here. It is the voice of God." And he did not go ahead any farther.

²⁸ From a letter we know that in 595 St. Gregory had some young Angles bought in Gaul. He intended to have them brought up in his monastery. *Ep.* VI, 7; *MGH, Reg.*, VI, 10; *PL*, LXXVII, 799.

²⁹ This is the conclusion of F. H. Dudden. *Gregory the Great, His Place in History and Thought*, I, 196. It is also the view of Dom Cabrol, *L'Angleterre chrétienne avant les Normands*, p. 53.

monastery, how I rose in contemplation above all changeable and decaying things, and thought of nothing but the things of heaven; how my soul, though pent within the body, soared beyond its fleshly prison, and looked with longing upon death itself as the means of entering into life." In another passage he says that he envies the holy life of his brethren still in the monastery, who have not lost, in the entanglements of this world, "the youth of their soul."³⁰

But he was not spared infirmities and suffering. We are told by Paul the Deacon that "Gregory's zeal for abstinence, his assiduity at prayer, and the austerity of his fasting brought on such stomach pains that he was scarcely able to stand up. Often he was taken by those crises which the physicians, in their Greek language, call syncope: at times the suffering was such that Gregory seemed on the point of breathing his last."³¹ His mother Silvia, who had retired to a convent close by, sent him some boiled vegetables in a silver dish, the only thing left of her former wealth.³²

The Byzantine Court

But that world, which the devout monk endeavored to flee from and to forget in the life of contemplation, remembered the wise administration of its *praefectus urbis*. In response to the unanimous desire of the people, Pope Benedict I took the deacon Gregory almost by force from his beloved solitude. He confided to him the management of ecclesiastical matters in one of the seven districts of Rome. Shortly afterward, Pelagius II decided to utilize Gregory's talents in a wider field. He

³⁰ *Dial.*, preface. Frequently it has been remarked that St. Gregory supplies very few data for the historian. That is true, if we mean precise details, verified dates and facts. But few writers have, by their spontaneity and sincerity, better revealed the depths of their own life and of the lives of their contemporaries. St. Gregory always speaks and writes with his whole soul.

³¹ Paul the Deacon, *Life of St. Gregory the Great*, chap. 5; *PL*, LXXV, 43.

³² John the Deacon, I, 9; II, 22; *PL*, LXXV, 66, 96.

called him to fill the office of apocrisiarius (nuncio) at Constantinople, at the court of Emperor Tiberius Constantinus. Such an office at that period was one of the highest and most important in the Church.

The new nuncio must have found a striking contrast between the humble monastic cell he had just left and the splendid imperial palace in which he was lodged.⁸³ Byzantium then shone with all the brilliance that Emperor Justinian and Empress Theodora had given it. Byzantine art, at its highest point, encouraged by the lavish munificence of the sovereigns, adorned vast monuments with an abundance of gold, silver, precious marbles, enamels, and gems. The marvel of these marvels was the Church of Saint Sophia, rebuilt by Justinian, with its vast cupola more than a hundred feet in diameter. The story is told that on the day of its dedication (December 27, 537), Justinian, in the fulness of joy, declared: "Solomon, I have vanquished you!" The ceremonies that were displayed in those palaces and temples were in keeping with those ancient monuments. Many barbarian chiefs, come to Constantinople to treat of the political affairs of their country, were fascinated by this magnificence. When the "divine emperor" appeared on days of solemn receptions, enthroned in the great triclinium of the throne-room, clad in the purple, gold-embroidered chlamys, his forehead shining with the sparkle of gems in the imperial crown, and when the courtiers, the barbarian princes, and the foreign ambassadors, following a ceremonial that was precisely established in every detail, bowed their heads three times at the feet of the *Basileus*, it must have been a most magnificent sight.⁸⁴

⁸³ The nuncio was lodged in the emperor's palace. *Morals*, preface, chap. 1; *PL*, LXXV, 511.

⁸⁴ On the magnificence of Constantinople in the sixth century, see Diehl, *Justinien et la civilisation byzantine au VI^e siècle*. See the detail of these ceremonies in the book of the *Ceremonies*, *PL*, CXII, 79 f., 1047. Cf. *MGH, script.*, III, 338. Kurth (*Les origines de la civilisation moderne*, I, chap. 6, "Byzance") describes them. And

But this resplendent appearance hid wretchedness which Pelagius' apocrisiary soon discovered. Emperor Justinian, by his magnificence, had emptied the public treasury. When his successor, Emperor Justin II, appeared for the first time at the Circus, he was greeted by the outcry of the crowd, saying: "Have pity on us!" Justin paid back the forced loans which Justinian had imposed; but, on the other hand, he refused to pay the customary tributes to the barbarians. The latter thereupon turned against the Empire. The Avars, an unconquered tribe, belonging to the same race as the Huns, had encamped in Pannonia and were making repeated incursions into imperial territory. The Lombards were ravaging Italy; the Persians were invading Syria.³⁵ When, in 578, Tiberius Constantinus, Justin's captain of the guards, ascended the throne at the death of Justin, he understood how chimerical it would be to try to maintain Justinian's work in full. He refused to undertake any intervention in Italy against the Lombards and limited his military activities to a vigorous campaign against the Persians.

Religious Despotism of the Emperor

A third affliction, consequent upon the other two, desolated the East. This was the hierarchical system of the Eastern Church, which little by little had put the whole episcopate under the domination of the patriarch of Constantinople, and the latter at the feet of the emperor. The Persian wars and the internal disturbances of the eastern provinces of the Empire, where the people were tearing each other in pieces in the doctrinal disputes of Monophysitism, had ruined the prestige of the patriarch of Alexandria. The situation of the patriarch of

we find a striking reminder of them in two mosaics that are in the Church of St. Vitalis in Ravenna.

³⁵ Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, pp. 177 ff.; Diehl, *Justinien*, p. 215.

Antioch was perhaps worse. To become bishop of that see it was henceforth necessary, as we see from the examples of Stephen III and Calandion, "to pass through the Caudine forks of the approbation given by the bishop of Byzantium."³⁶ The latter was the emperor's creature. As Duchesne says, "that tendency began to vary as soon as there existed out of Antioch a Christian court and a court-bishop. The latter becoming naturally the counsellor, the confidential director of princes or princesses, his influence, little by little, predominated over all other influences in the Eastern Churches."³⁷ The patriarch of Constantinople then drew all the bishops of the East in his train.

To give its true name to this episcopal body we ought to call it "the emperor's episcopate." . . . A sort of permanent Council, composed of members who varied in number, was constantly assembled within reach of the imperial palace. If the sovereign found it useful to bring them into direct communication with the bishops of the West, as he did in 343 for the great Council of Sardica, he would send them off in a body to the place of meeting in a long line of post-carriages and under the protection of an official overseer. If the emperor himself went to sojourn elsewhere, the whole episcopacy moved with him, even far from the East, as was seen at Sirmium, at Milan, and at Arles. It would be difficult to imagine an episcopal body better organized, easier to guide, and easier to be transported from place to place.³⁸

Such a situation dazzled the emperor and the patriarch. At the council of 381, the New Rome of the East had claimed for its bishop the same honors as for the bishop of ancient Rome.³⁹ From a claim of equality they went on to a claim of superiority. The famous argument was repeated: "It was not in the West, but in the East that the Savior was born." To this St.

³⁶ Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome*, p. 115. Vailhé, art. "Constantinople" in the *Dict. de théologie*.

³⁷ Duchesne, *loc. cit.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 115 f.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Gregory Nazianzen had already replied, with a spiritual implication: "It was also in the East that He was put to death."

Pope Gregory, by his own observations, could verify these words, written some years before by the bishops of Italy to the Frankish envoy just before the fifth ecumenical council in 552: "The Greek bishops have large and wealthy Churches. . . . But they bow to the wishes of the princes and agree, without demur, to whatever these ask of them."⁴⁰

St. Gregory in Constantinople

St. Gregory's correspondence shows that his attention was at that time turned to the famous Patriarch John, called the Faster, with whom he would later engage in a long conflict for the honor of the Holy See. This bishop, shabbily dressed, sleeping on the bare ground, scattering alms about him in profusion, continually fasting, was a schemer seeking then to win the people's confidence. For a time he won even the confidence of Gregory, who later on corrected his erroneous judgment. We find these words from his pen: "Would it not be better for him to eat meat than to soil his lips with falsehood? Of what use is it to fast, if one is puffed up with pride; or to dress shabbily, if one is clothed in vanity; or to appear like a lamb, if one really has the teeth of a wolf?"

The young diplomat could also observe at Byzantium, better than he could anywhere else, the strength and the weakness of the barbarian races. He saw there the chiefs of the Gothic tribes (Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals) eagerly ask for and gratefully receive that bestowal of titles and insignia which the emperors showered upon them, place their children in Eastern schools where they were prematurely introduced to a brilliant and subtle knowledge that would dazzle them with-

⁴⁰ *Sunt graeci episcopi habentes divites et opulentas ecclesias. . . . Secundum voluntatem principum quicquid ab eis quaesitum fuerit sine altercatione consentiunt.* Mansi, IX, 153.

out training them, and where they were habituated to easy-going and soft habits of living which would enervate them. He saw them asking for the baptism of Arianism, of that semi-Christianity that would become one of the chief causes of their future decline. He could form loftier hopes with regard to the Frankish and Anglo-Saxon barbarians. Two Frankish embassies appeared at the court of Constantinople. One, sent by Chilperic of Neustria, was there from 578 to 581; the other was sent in 590 by the regents of Austrasia. The later conduct of Gregory leads us to suppose that at this earlier date he was informed regarding the two hundred monasteries that had been founded there, and regarding the forty-five councils that had been held there since the conversion of Clovis, regarding the virtues of St. Caesarius of Arles and St. Germain of Paris, regarding the literary works of St. Gregory of Tours and of St. Fortunatus. It is even more likely that he had close relations with the Anglo-Saxon ambassadors from England, for we see him later announcing to his Eastern friends with particular expressions of joy the conversion of that kingdom. But Gregory had particularly close relations with the Spanish ambassador, Leander bishop of Seville, who came to Constantinople in 584 to ask the Emperor's support in behalf of his nephew, King Hermengild. Providence, before entrusting the government of the universal Church to the humble son of St. Benedict, thus brought him into contact with all the great social and political forces he would one day have to direct or oppose.

The papal apocrisiary must also have had dealings with the notable personages of Byzantine society. Theoctista and Gurdia (Emperor Maurice's sisters), several other members of the imperial family, the patrician Narses, two physicians (Theotimus and Theodore), all these must be reckoned among his friends. We see this pale and sickly monk taking part in the imperial procession on the great official feasts that were celebrated at Saint Sophia. Duty obliged him to be present. But

his heart inclined him to a calmer and more interior life. At a later date, in a letter to his friend St. Leander, he reminds him of the time when, to escape from worldly distractions, they both furtively left a church that was full of clamor and went off to hold pious discourse with a few brethren about God. Gregory had, in fact, brought a few monks with him to Constantinople. It was in their company and that of the devout Bishop of Seville that he passed the best hours of his life.

The Book of Morals

He was more and more worn out by his excessive burdens and poor health. At a later date he writes: "For many a long year I have been afflicted with frequent pains in the bowels, and the powers of my stomach are so broken that I am always in bad health. I also suffer from a constant succession of slow fevers."⁴¹ He took up his preferred book, the Book of Job, and in the presence of his friends commented on it line by line, letting his heart freely expand in that holy intimacy. From these friendly and informal conferences came the *Book of Morals on Job*, St. Gregory's first literary work. It was dedicated to Leander bishop of Seville. In this commentary we must not look for illumination on the literal sense of the text. The author gives no attention to that. Rather he goes deeper. At each sentence, almost at every word, mystical views rise from his soul, outbursts of love, joy, and adoration come forth from his heart.

A few quotations will acquaint us with the method and style of the pious commentator. Says Job: "That the Almighty may hear my desire."⁴² St. Gregory remarks:

It requires to be noted that it is not said, "my prayers," but "my desire, that the Almighty might hear." For true beseeching does not

⁴¹ *Crebris viscerum doloribus crucior, lentis quidem sed tamen continuis febribus anhelo. Morals*, Dedication to St. Leander bishop of Seville, chap. 5; *PL*, LXXV, 515.

⁴² Job 31: 35.

lie in the accents of the lips, but in the thoughts of the heart. For the stronger accents in the deepest ears of God it is not our words that make, but our desires. For if we seek eternal life with the mouth, but yet do not desire it with the heart, in crying out we keep silence. But if we desire in the heart, even when we are silent with the mouth, in being silent, we cry out.⁴³

It is not surprising that, even at that date, this monk was consulted by several monasteries of the East as a master of the mystical life.

Another passage will show us what fragrance of purity and charity the conferences of the monk-diplomat must have left in that cultured atmosphere of the Byzantine world. Reaching this verse: "Thou shalt know that thy tabernacle is in peace, and visiting thy image thou shalt not sin,"⁴⁴ a mystical sense appears to Gregory's mind. The tabernacle, he says, is the body; the tabernacle in peace is the body in purity. He says further:

For that chasteness of the flesh is as nothing, which is not recommended by sweetness of spirit. Whence after the "peace of thy tabernacle" it is fitly subjoined, "and thou shalt visit thy likeness, and shalt not sin." For the likeness of man is another man. For a fellow-creature is rightly called our "likeness," in that in him we discern what we ourselves are. Now in the visiting of the body we go to our neighbor by the accession of steps, but in the spiritual visiting, we are led not by the footstep but by affection. He then "visits his likeness," whoever directs his way to one whom he sees to be like to himself in nature, by the footsteps of love. . . . What advantage is it to restrain the

⁴³ *Aeternam vitam si ore petimus, nec tamen corde desideramus, clamantes tacemus. Si vero desideramus ex corde, etiam cum ore conticescimus, tacentes clamamus. PL, LXXVI, 258.*

⁴⁴ Job 5:24. This Vulgate translation is not literal. The meaning of the original text is this: "You will know that peace is beneath your tents and, visiting the place where your flocks are grazing, you will see that nothing is wanting." But Gregory, in his commentary, is concerned only with finding a mystical sense in the verses of the Latin translation.

flesh by continence, if the mind is uninstructed to expand itself by compassion in the love of our neighbor? ⁴⁵

This tender charity never degenerated into weakness. The patriarch Eutychius professed an erroneous doctrine about the impalpability of bodies after the resurrection. The nature of the risen body he reduced to so little that it was questionable how the dogma of the resurrection of the flesh was safeguarded in his doctrine. The apocrisiary Gregory opposed Eutychius in several debates. In his *Book of Morals* he relates various incidents of this theological dispute. His account is of great dogmatic and exegetical interest. Therein we also see that Eutychius abjured his error before dying. On his deathbed he grasped the skin of one of his hands and said: "I profess that we will all rise in this flesh." ⁴⁶

Gregory's Diplomatic Mission

We are not informed regarding Gregory's diplomatic mission at Constantinople. The only extant document is a letter of Pelagius II, written in 584 to his apocrisiary. "Speak and act," says the Pope. . . . "If the most pious prince does not deign to grant us a *magister militum* and a *dux*, we are reduced to the last extremity." ⁴⁷ Pillaged by the Lombards, drained by taxes, troubled by factions, Italy and Rome looked for a savior. The exarch Longinus, imperiled in Ravenna by the barbarians, announced that he was unable to protect the territory of Rome.

⁴⁵ *Quid prodest per continentiam carnem restringere, si mens se per compassionem nesciat in proximi amore dilatare. Morals, Bk. VI, chap. 34 (alias 23), PL, LXXV, 758.*

⁴⁶ *Morals, XIV, 74; PL, LXXV, 1079.* Cf. Pargoire, *L'Église byzantine de 527 à 847*, p. 42. The doctrine maintained by Eutychius is known as Aphthartodocetism. The Aphthartodocetae were opposed to the Phtarolatrae. Both sects were sprung from the Monophysite heresy. Emperor Justinian, at the end of his life, fell into Aphthartodocetism.

⁴⁷ Letter quoted by John the Deacon, I, 32.

Emperor Maurice, who had just succeeded Tiberius when Pelagius' letter arrived, was an intelligent and energetic man. But, aware of his powerlessness, he merely replaced his exarch Longinus with a more courageous official, Smaragdus, and, with the aid of the Franks, attempted a diversion, which was not crowned with the expected success. This was the whole fruit of Gregory's nunciature. When shortly afterward, recalled by the Supreme Pontiff, the apocrisiary set out for Rome in company with the exarch Smaragdus, he might well have told himself that his mission had been almost a failure. But he now had a thorough acquaintance with the secrets of the Byzantine policy. He had put his finger on the radical powerlessness of the Eastern emperors to come to the aid of Italy. He comprehended that, if God willed to save Rome and the world, one only power, the papacy, was capable of accomplishing that great work.

Various Calamities

But did God will to save the world? Was not the end of time close at hand? What the Benedictine monk perceived upon returning to his monastery of St. Andrew prompted him to consider the latter prospect. Tempests, floods, and earthquakes spread consternation everywhere.⁴⁸ People recalled a popular tradition reported by Pliny the Elder: "The city of Rome never experienced a shock, which was not the forerunner of some great calamity."⁴⁹ The sons of St. Benedict called to mind especially the prophecy of their patriarch, who said: "Rome shall not be utterly destroyed by strangers: but shall be so shaken with tempests, lightnings, whirlwinds, and earthquakes, that it will fall to decay of itself."⁵⁰ But would not the ruin

⁴⁸ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Longobards*, Bk. III, chap. 23; *PL*, XCV, 525.

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⁵⁰ St. Gregory, *Dialogues*, Bk. II, chap. 15.

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⁵⁰ St. Gregory, *Dialogues*, Bk. II, chap. 15.

of Rome be the end of everything? It was Lactantius who wrote: "When that capital of the world shall have fallen . . . who can doubt that the end has now arrived to the affairs of men and the whole world?"⁵¹ Tertullian had frequently expressed the same feeling of religious terror.⁵²

Irregularities entered the monastery itself, the blessed retreat to which Gregory returned so full of joy, hoping there to find the holy peace of Christ. There were no grievously scandalous disorders. But during Gregory's absence an excessive attachment to the goods of this world had crept into St. Andrew's monastery. The extent of the holy abbot's grief may be judged from the gravity of the penalties he felt called upon to impose. A monk, Justus by name, under the promptings of final repentance, had declared on his deathbed, in the presence of all his brethren, that he was keeping hidden away three gold coins. Gregory decided to mete out a penalty that would impress upon the hearts of all a salutary horror for a sin that recalled that of Judas. "When Brother Justus is dead," said Gregory, "let not his body be buried amongst the rest of the monks, but make a grave for him in some dunghill or other, and there cast it in, together with the three crowns which he left behind him, crying out all with joint voice: 'Thy money be with thee unto perdition'; and so put earth upon him."⁵³

Affected by these events, the tendency to melancholy, which we have remarked in Gregory's soul, increased. Yet no feeling could make him hesitate in the presence of some duty to be performed. At this very time he carried out various missions which Pope Pelagius entrusted to him, notably certain

⁵¹ Lactantius, *Institutes*, Bk. VII, chap. 25.

⁵² Tertullian, *Apol.*, chap. 32; *Ad Scapulam*, chap. 2.

⁵³ *Dialogues*, Bk. IV, chap. 55. St. Gregory adds that the guilty monk died contrite and repentant and that he himself, out of compassion for that soul, celebrated thirty masses for its intention. On the thirtieth day Brother Justus appeared to one of his brethren and announced that he was delivered. This is the origin of the so-called Gregorian masses, that is, thirty masses said on consecutive days for a departed soul.

difficult negotiations regarding the affair of the Three Chapters.

Disasters of all sorts, however, continued to pour upon Rome and the neighboring regions. After the floods, earthquakes, and famine, the pestilence broke out. Pope Pelagius was one of the first victims of it. Rome was now without a bishop, the Church without a head, at a time when the guidance of a wise and strong pontiff had become so necessary.

Gregory Elected Pope

All eyes turned to the abbot of St. Andrew's monastery. The Senate, the clergy, and the people unanimously chose him without delay despite his objections. He accepted, on condition of receiving the approbation of Emperor Maurice. He was hopeful that the Emperor, yielding to his entreaties, would refuse a confirmation that, in the practice of the period, was regarded as necessary. But Germanus, the prefect of Rome, intercepted the letter written by the deacon Gregory to the Emperor, and he himself wrote, begging for a prompt reply of confirmation.⁵⁴

Events forced Gregory, despite his reluctance, to act as leader. The pestilence increased in violence. To calm the people, he decided to ascend the pulpit of St. Peter's Basilica. With that poor, feeble, impaired voice which often during his pontificate compelled him to have his sermons read aloud by others, he delivered a moving discourse, which Gregory of Tours has preserved for us. Then he organized a general procession to

⁵⁴ St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, p. 426. All the incidents connected with St. Gregory's election are related in this chapter of Gregory of Tours' *History*, with details that cannot reasonably be called into question. They were related to the historian by one of his deacons who was at Rome and witnessed all these events. Pope St. Gregory's letters supply confirmation of the account of Gregory of Tours.

obtain from God the cessation of the plague. Says Gregory of Tours: "The clergy set out from the Basilica of SS. Cosmas and Damian; the monks, from the Basilica of SS. Gervasius and Protasius; the nuns, from the Basilica of SS. Marcellinus and Peter; the children, from the Basilica of SS. John and Paul; the men, from the Basilica of St. Stephen; the widows, from the Basilica of St. Euphemia; the married women, from the Basilica of St. Clement." When the long procession of these seven groups of the faithful, each led by one of the priests of the seven regions of the city, slowly and devoutly advanced, singing the Kyrie eleison, some old Roman, who had formerly witnessed the great pagan festivals, might have observed how profoundly the city had been transformed. The Christian Rome of the Middle Ages was manifested for the first time.

The prayers lasted three days. "Our deacon, who was present," says Gregory of Tours, "declared that in the space of a single hour, while the people were pouring forth the voice of their supplication to the Lord, there fell dead no less than eighty persons."⁵⁵

It was related that, at the moment when the procession was passing before the Mausoleum of Hadrian, the archangel Michael was seen returning a flaming sword to its sheath, in token that the plague was about to cease; and the plague ceased. But this account is more than two centuries later than the events,⁵⁶ and contemporary writers make no reference to these miraculous details.⁵⁷ The Benedictines of St. Maur, therefore,

⁵⁵ St. Gregory of Tours, *op. cit.*, Bk. X, chap. 1 (p. 428).

⁵⁶ This miraculous event is not mentioned by Paul the Deacon, who wrote in the eighth century, or by John the Deacon, who, at the close of the ninth century, wrote the life of St. Gregory at the request of Pope John VIII, as he states in the preface. *PL*, LXXV, 61.

⁵⁷ St. Gregory of Tours' deacon, who was present at the procession, makes no mention of this miracle; or, at least, Gregory of Tours, giving his deacon's account, does not speak of it. Yet we know how carefully the author of the *History of the Franks* sought out the smallest miraculous incidents and how enthusiastically he related them.

in their scholarly edition of St. Gregory's works, regard them as doubtful.⁵⁸

However, the news of deacon Gregory's election reached Constantinople. It was received by Emperor Maurice, by members of the court, and by the Patriarch with unanimous joy. Gregory alone was fearful. Learning that his letter to the Emperor had been intercepted, he thought to avoid by flight the burden of the supreme pontificate. The city gates were guarded by a watchful crowd. He won over some foreign merchants, who conveyed him in a wicker basket. Thus he escaped, and he wandered from cave to cave in the forests and mountains. At the end of three days, the crowd found him and brought him back to Rome in triumph.⁵⁹

On September 3, after previously being ordained priest, Gregory was consecrated bishop of the city of Rome. An immense throng, filling the five naves of St. Peter's Basilica, acclaimed the new Pope.

Gregory was about fifty years old. He was of medium height, thin face, pallid complexion. He had a fine, broad forehead, his nose was slightly upturned, his chin prominent, his eyes clear, his whole features marked with a gentle, noble expression.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ *Quae narrantur de viso angelo et sedata peste dubiae videntur fidei*, PL, LXXV, 280. This is the view adopted in the *Civiltà cattolica* (1890), Vol. V: "Il pontificato di S. Gregorio Magno nella storia della civiltà cristiana," pp. 29 f. The article in the *Civiltà* is unsigned, but it was written by Father Grisar, S.J., professor at Innsbruck University. Cf. *Civiltà*, January 1, 1893, p. 191. The Benedictine editors of St. Gregory's works are mistaken in tracing to this procession of 590 the origin of the Great Litany or St. Mark's procession. The earliest document referring to the Great Litany is of the year 598 (Jaffé, I, 1153). Cf. Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, p. 276.

⁵⁹ St. Gregory frequently alludes to his flight. See *Ep.* VII, 4; PL, LXXVII, 855; *MGH, Reg.*, VII, 5; and *Pastoral Rule*, preface.

⁶⁰ John the Deacon (Bk. IV, chaps. 83, 84), in this very precise way, thus describes the picture of St. Gregory, which he saw in the ninth century in the monastery *ad clivum Scauri*. This portrait was made a short time before Gregory's elevation to the papacy. See Angelo Rocca, *De imaginibus S. Gregorii Magni*, in PL, LXXV, 461-478.

Condition of Christendom

If, beyond the crowd that hailed him with their joyous shouts, his thought carried him to the vast field which Providence presented to him for the exercise of his apostolic zeal, he may have felt passing before him one of those clouds of sadness which sometimes overshadowed him. The schism of the Three Chapters was still stirring up the provinces of Venetia and Istria, Nestorianism persisted in Asia, Monophysitism in Egypt, Donatism in north Africa; in Spain the last disturbances of Arianism were dying out under King Leovigild; the Lombards were threatening Rome and filling the length and breadth of Italy with dread; on all the frontiers of the Roman world floods of barbarians, coming nobody knew from where, were ceaselessly pouring in, bringing with them future trouble; to the south, compliant but enervated races; to the north, proud but unconquerable races; the Emperor manifestly unable to dominate the situation; one power alone uncrushed and ceaselessly growing, that of the bishop of Rome, that power precisely which had been placed in the hands of that trembling soul and frail body. Who would not have been alarmed at the sight?

The apprehensions and fears of the new Pope appear on every page of his correspondence at this period. Learning that the patrician John of Constantinople encouraged the Emperor to confirm his election, he writes to him, saying: "See where your favor has brought me. I find fault with your friendship, I blame you for drawing me away from the repose you knew I sought. May God give you eternal reward for your good intention, but may He free me, as pleases Him, from so many perils."⁶¹ He wrote to a certain notable, Andrew, as follows: "Upon hearing of my elevation to the episcopacy, weep if you love me, for I find here so many temporal occupations that I

⁶¹ *Reg.*, I, 20; *PL*, LXXVII, 483.

feel myself almost separated from the love of God.”⁶² To Theoctista, the Emperor’s sister, he writes: “Under color of episcopacy, I have been brought back to the world. . . . Even though I have no fear for myself, I am greatly afraid for those who have been committed to me. On every side I am tossed by the waves of business. After business I long to return to my heart; but, driven therefrom by vain tumults of thoughts, I am unable to return. From this cause, then, that which is within me is made to be far from me.”⁶³

If the souls most suited to carry out a mission are at times those who most dread its burden, probably this is because they perceive the difficulties and dangers better. This is also true when they are deeply religious, because they abandon themselves more confidently to divine providence. The new Pope was one of these souls.

Gregory, for a moment, was fearful of seeing his monastic spirit lost in the atmosphere of the papal court. But the world would soon be amazed at seeing the papal court penetrated by the monastic spirit. One of Gregory I’s earliest decrees aimed at excluding laymen from the *cubiculum pontificis*. He surrounded himself with the holiest and most learned monks and made them his counselors. John the Deacon speaks enthusiastically of that court of monks installed in the Lateran Palace.⁶⁴ Evidently this was a most timely political step. The time would come when the popes deliberately place the management of political affairs in lay hands. But just at present a particularly urgent work was to make the purest spirit of Christianity reign at the center of the Catholic Church. Where better could it be found than in that young Benedictine family where the spirit of the patriarch of Subiaco was living in all its fervor?

Then began for Gregory that vast correspondence, of which

⁶² *Reg.*, I, 29; *PL*, LXXVII, 483.

⁶³ *Reg.*, I, 5; *PL*, LXXVII, 448.

⁶⁴ John the Deacon, II, 13 f.; *PL*, LXXV, 92 f.

the 848 letters that remain are merely the fragments.⁶⁵ There is no pope, until the time of Gregory VII, who has left us a similar monument of his activity. Month by month, almost week by week, we can follow him in the varied political, social, canonical, theological, and moral concerns that absorb his life.⁶⁶

The *Pastoral Rule*

While he was thus pouring out his activity in the practical realm, he set forth the theory of the pastoral ministry in his *Liber regulae pastoralis*. Less brilliant than St. Chrysostom's treatise *On the Priesthood*, less lifelike than St. Bernard's *De consideratione*, the *Pastoral Rule* of St. Gregory is more precise, it more completely and more closely examines the various duties of the pastoral office. The first part, *qualiter veniat*, studies the marks of vocation to the priesthood; the second part, *qualiter vivat*, describes the life of a true pastor; the third, *qualiter doceat*, gives rules for apostolic preaching; the fourth and last, *qualiter se cognoscat*, crowns this remarkable theory of the priestly life by showing that its source is to be found in a profound interior life. The entire work is inspired by this thought, that the government of souls is the art of arts—*ars artium regimen animarum*.

St. Gregory's *Pastoral Rule* became, in the Middle Ages, the code of the clerical life, as the Rule of St. Benedict remained the code of the monastic life. Soon it was spread in Spain by Leander of Seville. In England King Alfred the Great had it translated into the Saxon tongue. Old Italian translations of it have been found.⁶⁷ In Gaul, in the ninth century, the bishops

⁶⁵ This is Ewald's view in the *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, III, 431-625. The *Registrum* of St. Gregory's letters forms two volumes of the *Monumenta Germaniae historica*.

⁶⁶ John the Deacon, II, 5.

⁶⁷ In 1869 Cerruti, curator of the Ambrosian Library in Milan, published a thirteenth century Italian translation of it.

took their oath on the collection of the canons and on the *Pastoral Rule*.⁶⁸ The Second Council of Reims (813) declares that St. Gregory's *Pastoral Rule* and St. Benedict's *Rule* have been read in the presence of all the fathers.⁶⁹ Next to the Gospel and the conciliar decisions, no book exercised a greater influence upon the Church of the Middle Ages.

The *Liber regulae pastoralis* was written in 591.⁷⁰ It was about the same time that a popular tradition, taken by John the Deacon from the Anglo-Saxon biographer, seems to place the fact of a miraculous apparition that resulted in finally quieting the saint's apprehensions about the duties of his office.

Legend of the Thirteenth Guest

One day, we are told, Gregory gave orders to his steward to invite twelve poor men to his table. This was a practice with Gregory. But that day, when he entered the dining-room, instead of twelve poor men, he saw thirteen. "Why are there thirteen?" he asked the steward. "Most honored father," the latter replied, "there are only twelve." St. Gregory however still saw thirteen. But one of them, during the meal, kept changing the appearance of his face from moment to moment. Now he was a handsome youth, and now a venerable old man. Gregory, taking him aside, asked him his name. "Why do you ask me my name," said he, "which is admirable? Do you recall that one day, while you were at St. Andrew's monastery, an unfortunate merchant came to you, saying that he had lost everything in a shipwreck? You gave him twelve pieces of money, and at length the silver dish in which your food was brought to you, the treasured souvenir of your beloved mother.

⁶⁸ Second Council of Chalons, Third Council of Tours.

⁶⁹ Labbe, *Conc.*, VII, 1255.

⁷⁰ Bardenhewer's, *Les pères de l'Église* (French trans.), III, 202. In a letter to St. Leander bishop of Seville, St. Gregory says: *Librum regulae pastoralis, quem in episcopatus mei exordio scripsi*. *Reg.*, V, 53; *PL*, LXXVII, 778.

I am that merchant to whom you gave your mother's dish, or rather I am the angel whom God sent to you to prove your mercy." When Gregory, who, as the narrator remarks, "had never beheld an angel of God," was trembling with amazement, his mysterious visitor said to him: "Fear not; it is for the alms of that silver dish that God has given you the chair of St. Peter. And now behold, God sends me to be your guardian as long as you remain in this world. Whatever you ask, will be granted you through me." Thereupon the holy Pope, now reassured, said: "If, for my little alms, God has made me supreme pastor of His holy Church and has sent me an angel to keep me, what will He not grant me if I set to work to perform, with my whole strength, whatever He wishes of me?" ⁷¹

Varied Activities

What is beyond question, what is evidenced by all the most authentic documents, is that the holy Pontiff, after being hesitant at first, set to work to perform with his whole might what God wished of him. The register of his letters ⁷² shows him, from the very first year of his pontificate, taking a hand in ecclesiastical affairs in Spain, where King Recared had just

⁷¹ John the Deacon, II, 23; *PL*, LXXV, 96. The historical genuineness of this story, which remained one of the best known episodes of the legends of St. Gregory in the Middle Ages, has been questioned. Some consider it as simply a repetition of another incident related by the Pope in one of his homilies (*Hom. 23 in Evang.*, Bk. II; *PL*, LXXVI, 1183). This is the view maintained by Father Grisar, S.J., in the *Civiltà cattolica*, VI (1890), 418. The great Jesuit scholar says: *Questa legenda non è che la ripetizione a verbo di un fatto già conosciuto a tempi di Gregorio, anzi da lui medesimo raccontato al popolo come avvenuto ad un padre di famiglia*. We would not venture to share the opinion of the eminent historian of the popes of the Middle Ages. The two narratives are not identical, and there seems to us to be nothing that indicates they refer to the same event.

⁷² St. Gregory's letters are the safest documents for his life. The note on him in the *Liber pontificalis* is exceedingly brief. His Life by Paul the Deacon was written in the eighth century; that of John the Deacon, at the end of the ninth century. Both of them are largely dependent upon a biography written in Northumbria at the beginning of the eighth century and not to be relied upon as exact.

died and where the Third Council of Seville had just been held,⁷³ in Africa, which was still disturbed by the Donatists,⁷⁴ in Sicily, which was stirred up against the Jews,⁷⁵ in Gaul in connection with the same Jewish question.⁷⁶ In February, 591, he assembled a council at Rome.⁷⁷ That same year he reorganized the administration of the patrimonies of the Roman Church,⁷⁸ established the budget of his works of charity,⁷⁹ regulated and modified, according to the requirements of the situation, the rights of jurisdiction of the bishops of Italy.⁸⁰ "Like an Argos with a hundred eyes," says John the Deacon, "the holy Pontiff saw everywhere."⁸¹ But it was with anguish that he turned his gaze to the East. Two great disputes would soon arise in that part of the Christian world, one raised by Emperor Maurice, the other by the patriarch of Constantinople.

Relations with Emperor Maurice

Gregory I deemed it an honor to be one of the humblest subjects of the Empire and one of the most loyal friends of Maurice. He was effusive in thanking the Emperor for his generous alms and for his zeal in defending the purity of the faith against the poison of heresy.⁸² But, whenever the Byzantine autocrat attempted to infringe upon the rights of the Church or of Christian conscience, he found opposing him the Pope who wrote to Sabinianus, his nuncio at Constantinople,

⁷³ *Ep.*, I, 43; *PL*, LXXVII, 496.

⁷⁴ *Ep.*, I, 74, and II, 64; *PL*, LXXVII, 528, 581.

⁷⁵ *Ep.*, I, 35; IX, 36; XI, 30, 37; *MGH*, pp. 47, 445.

⁷⁶ *Ep.*, I, 47; *PL*, LXXVII, 510.

⁷⁷ *Ep.*, I, 25; *PL*, LXXVII, 468.

⁷⁸ *Ep.*, I, 72; VII, 18, 19, 20, 21; *PL*, LXXVII, 526, 872-875.

⁷⁹ *Ep.*, I, 18, 39, 46; *PL*, LXXVII, 463, 493, 508; John the Deacon, II, 24; *PL*, LXXV, 96.

⁸⁰ *Ep.*, I, 15; II, 16, 18, 31, 35; *PL*, LXXVII, 460, 551, 552, 565, 575.

⁸¹ John the Deacon, II, 55; *PL*, LXXV, 112.

⁸² *Ep.*, V, 30; VI, 16, 65; *PL*, LXXVII, 755, 808, 848.

these lofty words: "Thou art well acquainted with my ways, that I bear long; but if once I have determined not to bear, I go gladly in the face of all dangers. . . . I was before prepared rather to die than that the Church of the blessed Apostle Peter should degenerate in my days." ⁸³

The most celebrated of the conflicts that arose between the Pope and the Emperor was the one that occurred in connection with the admission of soldiers into the monasteries. By an edict of 592, Maurice forbade any official or any soldier to enter the ranks of the clergy or any monastic community. Gregory, though recognizing the good grounds for certain legislative precautions of the decree, protested against the unqualified character of the imperial prohibitions. He saw therein a violation of the freedom of ecclesiastical vocations. He wrote as follows:

I am speaking, not as a bishop nor as a subject, but simply from the right which I find in my heart as a man. . . . Hearken, O Emperor, to what Christ says to you through me, his humble servant, and keep it in mind: "I raised you from being a clerk to the post of captain of the guards, from that position to the rank of Caesar, from Caesar to emperor. I have confided my priests to you. And you seek to ban soldiers from my service." . . . In the name of that terrible judge I implore that your piety find the means, whether by a favorable interpretation or by a suitable modification, to soften the rigor of this law.

He concludes the letter thus: "I have now performed my twofold duty. I have paid to my emperor the tribute of my obedience, which is due to my emperor, and to God the testimony of my conscience, which belongs only to God." ⁸⁴ At the end of five years Maurice agreed to modify the law in the way Gregory asked. Government officials were allowed to enter the

⁸³ *Ep.*, IV, 47; *PL*, LXXVII, 721.

⁸⁴ *Ep.*, III, 65; *PL*, LXXVII, 662, 665.

monasteries, provided they had made their reports, and soldiers after undergoing a three years' novitiate.

John the Faster

The disagreements with the Patriarch of Constantinople were longer and more serious. They concerned the title "ecumenical patriarch" which John the Faster publicly conferred on himself. The issue was more than a question of words. Gregory was not mistaken as to that. True, the title was neither novel nor precisely defined. It is to be found in several earlier documents, applied to the patriarchs and to the popes.⁸⁵ This word of itself, following the language of the Eastern Church of that time, did not imply a claim to universal supremacy, any more than does the term "catholicos" even today used by the head of the Armenian Church and of the Chaldean Church. But the former apocriary was not deceived as to the real tendencies that were hidden beneath John the Faster's obstinacy in giving himself the title of ecumenical patriarch. Gregory wrote as follows: "If we do not go beyond the mere words, it is simply a question of syllables; but if we consider the evil purpose that prompts their use, we see a universal danger in them."⁸⁶ He was mindful of the movement of independence which little by little was separating Constantinople from Rome. Says Duchesne:

The bishops of Constantinople, far from being satisfied with the preponderant and antitraditional situation, which they held from the assemblies of 381 and of 451, nourished but one ambition—that of becoming the absolute heads of the Church. Infatuated by the magnitude of their city, by their preponderance in the Councils of the Emperor, incapable of realizing the importance of aught outside the Greek

⁸⁵ See the examples cited by Pargoire, *L'Église byzantine*, p. 50, and by Vailhé, art. "Constantinople" in the *Dict. de théologie*.

⁸⁶ *Si quantitatem sermonis attendimus, quæ sunt syllabæ; si vero pondus iniquitatis, universa perniciēs. Ep., VII, 33; PL, LXXVII, 891.*

sphere of influence, they came to look upon themselves as the center of Christendom.⁸⁷

The bishop occupying the see of Constantinople at the close of the fourth century was that John IV, called the Faster, whom Gregory had already met during his nunciature. By the harshness of his character, by the imperial favor which he had acquired, by the widespread reputation for holiness which won the populace to him, he seemed the very one to stir up a schism. His earnest zeal in the repression of heretics gave him a reputation for pure orthodoxy. It is not unusual to find such traits in the fomenters of schism and the authors of heresies. They become despots and rebels from the same tendency, namely, excessive attachment to their own ideas. The people, often measuring a man's orthodoxy by his eagerness in suspecting the orthodoxy of others, are easily deceived. At a council held in 588, John IV had called himself "ecumenical patriarch"; according to St. Gregory, he had done so in such terms that he changed the traditional meaning of the title, reserving it to himself alone, to the exclusion of all others.⁸⁸ Unfortunately we have not the acts of this council and therefore are unable to confirm the view taken by the Roman Pontiff. Furthermore, John IV soon manifested the spirit of unrestraint that animated him. In July, 593, Gregory learned that a priest named John and some monks of Isauria, one a priest, had been accused of heresy by the Patriarch and that the priest monk had been beaten with a rod in a church at Constantinople. Gregory complained. The Patriarch replied that he knew nothing of the affair. In answer to this, Gregory sent an indignant reply, saying: "I have received a letter bearing your name, but I am un-

⁸⁷ Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome*, p. 140.

⁸⁸ *Ad hoc perductus es, ut despectis fratribus episcopus appetas solus vocari.* Mansi, IX, 1217. The *Liber pontificalis* gives the same interpretation. In the note on Pope Boniface III (607), it is said: *Ecclesia constantinopolitana prima se omnium ecclesiarum scribebat.* *Lib. pont.*, I, 316.

willing to believe that it comes from you. What could be worse than that servants of God be treated thus and the pastor not know it? It is certainly a strange sort of preaching that exacts faith by blows of a rod.”⁸⁹ The letter ends with a request that the Patriarch explain his conduct to the papal apocrisiary Sabinianus, who is prepared to decide the question according to justice.

After several parleys, Gregory succeeded in having the affair settled justly; and the accused priests and monks were reinstated. But in his correspondence John the Faster, in almost every line, took pains to assume the title of ecumenical patriarch. Gregory then wrote to the Patriarch John, to Emperor Maurice, to Empress Constantina, and to the apocrisiary Sabinianus four letters that were remarkable for prudence, eloquence, and depth of piety.⁹⁰ Gregory's complaint was that the Bishop of Constantinople was disturbing the Church with regard to an old title, that he was fomenting a spirit of division which might lead to the worst calamities, that he was ignoring the decisions of Pelagius II, who had proscribed that pompous title, that he did not imitate the bishops of Rome who, at the Council of Chalcedon, refused the title lest they might seem to be attributing the episcopacy to themselves alone and refusing it to their brother-bishops.⁹¹ It was called a question of words. But they were words that were rending the Church. Gregory said: “A mere affair of a title, a simple question of words! That is easily said. When antichrist calls himself God, then dare to say: A mere affair of a title, a simple question of words.” Thereafter Gregory, in public documents, always called himself “the servant of the servants of God.”⁹²

⁸⁹ *Nova vero atque inaudita est ista praedicatio, quae verberibus exigit fidem. Ep., III, 53; PL, LXXVII, 649.*

⁹⁰ Jaffé, 1357, 1360, 1352, 1358.

⁹¹ *Ep., V, 18; PL, LXXVII, 738.*

⁹² Gregory took this title in the document donating his family palace to the Benedictine monastery. His successors have preserved this title of *servus servorum Dei*.

Soon after this, Eulogius the patriarch of Alexandria, in a letter to the Pope, calls him ecumenical pontiff, although Gregory had forbidden that he be addressed by this title. He reproached Eulogius in these remarkable terms: "I said that you should give this pompous title neither to me nor to anyone else. I cannot accept an appellation which, by elevating me beyond measure, seems to lower the others. Let us seek to elevate ourselves in virtue, not in words. I do not wish to glorify myself in a way to lessen the glory of my brothers. My honor is the honor of the universal Church. My greatness is the greatness of my brothers in the episcopate. I feel myself truly honored only when I see that no one is refused the honor due to him. . . . Away with words that puff up vanity and that wound charity." ⁹³

But Gregory's example and his efforts in the matter were fruitless. Boniface III, in 607, obtained from Emperor Phocas a constitution withdrawing the title "ecumenical" from the Patriarch Cyriacus. This, however, was for a short time only. Cyriacus' successors resumed the title, and the emperors no longer stopped granting it to them.⁹⁴ From these great disputes Gregory gained nothing except the satisfaction of having performed his duty, and the conviction, henceforth quite definite, that the Roman Church could hope for nothing from the power of the Eastern emperors, and that it had everything to fear from the patriarchs of Constantinople.⁹⁵

Nevertheless Gregory was pleased to maintain throughout his life most friendly epistolary relations with the devout laity and the monks of Byzantium who had put themselves under his spiritual guidance when he was nuncio there. His spiritual letters to Empress Constantina, to the physician Theotimus, to several princesses of the court, and especially to the patrician

⁹³ *Ep.*, VIII, 30; *PL*, LXXVII, 933.

⁹⁴ Pargoire, *L'Église byzantine*, p. 51.

⁹⁵ On this whole question, see Vailhé, "Saint Grégoire le Grand et le titre de patriarche oecumenique" in the *Échos d'Orient*, May, 1908, pp. 161 ff.

lady Rusticiana, reveal a gentle, fatherly soul, experienced in the knowledge of the human heart, at times merry, and again easily rising to the realms of the loftiest mysticism.⁹⁶

The Church in Asia and Africa

Gregory's apostolic zeal did not forget those regions of the Far East where his friend the patrician Narses, before whom the children of the Persians trembled, had just established on his throne the representative of the Sassanian dynasty, Chosroes II.⁹⁷ Chosroes, in gratitude for the help he had received from the Byzantine army, "proclaimed liberty of conscience in his states. At the instigation of his Christian wives (the Armenian Siriu and the Roman Mary), he made donations to the churches. He showed special devotion to the martyr Sergius. . . . It was said that Sergius fought for Chosroes at the head of the Byzantine army, and this legend was piously retained in popular tradition."⁹⁸ These events brought joy to Gregory. Learning that Bishop Domitian, metropolitan of Armenia and relative of the Emperor, took advantage of Chosroes' decree of tolerance to preach a mission in the Persian Empire, Gregory felicitated him and encouraged him. "I regret," he said, "that the Emperor of the Persians has not been converted, but your preaching will receive its reward. The Ethiopian comes forth from the bath as black as he entered; but the bathkeeper is paid."⁹⁹

⁹⁶ He pleasantly discusses with Theotimus a certain opinion of Plato (III, 54); he twits Rusticiana about her preference for Constantinople and her exaggerated fears with regard to the dangers of Rome (II, 27; IV, 46). A certain lady of the Empress' household, when Gregory was raised to the papacy, asked him to send her in writing an absolution of all her sins; Gregory answered her with spirited pleasantry (VII, 25). A patrician lady, Clementina, whose correspondence is unfortunately very incomplete, was perhaps a most original character, worthy of a place beside Rusticiana, and almost in the same class as St. Jerome's famous correspondents, Paula and Eustochium. (I, 11; III, 1; X, 15, 18; *PL*, LXXVII, 457, 603, 1076, 1078.)

⁹⁷ Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, pp. 204-206.

⁹⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 208 f.

⁹⁹ *Ep.*, III, 67; *PL*, LXXVII, 668.

It was likewise by Byzantine relations that Christianity penetrated to the heart of Arabia. But it had no small difficulty in maintaining itself and taking root there. Mundhir, prince of Hira, the capital of Persian Arabia, adored the Semitic divinities and had four hundred Christian virgins immolated to the goddess Ouzza, the Arabian Venus.¹⁰⁰ But finally, about the year 594, Naaman, Mundhir's successor, was converted to the true faith.

The success of the imperial armies Gregory regarded as a pledge of the spread of the Gospel. To the patrician Gennadius exarch of Africa, he wrote as follows: "It is said that you wage war, not to shed blood, but to enlarge the commonwealth where we see the name of God honored. You understand that, whereas outward virtues win this world's glory, only interior qualities of a pure heart make us worthy to share in the joys of heaven."¹⁰¹

The Church in Europe

Gregory's thoughts turned especially to the people of Spain, about whom he was informed in letters from his friend Leander, and to the people of Gaul, many of whom he had known in Constantinople, and to his beloved Anglo-Saxons, whose misfortune had so deeply affected him years before. Whether he is felicitating King Recared of Spain for his zeal and giving encouragement to those important councils of Saragossa and Toledo, at which the civil and canon law of the Middle Ages is roughly outlined;¹⁰² whether he is stimulating the zeal of Vigilius of Arles and Serenus of Marseilles in Gaul to reform certain abuses that bore the marks of simony and of practices that foreshadowed the heresy of the Iconoclasts;¹⁰³ whether

¹⁰⁰ Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome*, p. 202.

¹⁰¹ *Ep.*, I, 75; *PL*, LXXVII, 528.

¹⁰² *Ep.*, VII, 122; *PL*, LXXVII, 1052.

¹⁰³ *Ep.*, VI, 49; XI, 13; *PL*, LXXVII, 834, 1128.

he is writing to Brunehilde letters in which salutary advice is mingled with felicitations; whether he is following, with fatherly concern, that English mission which seems to have been his most cherished apostolic undertaking; everywhere we see the holy Pope devote himself so completely to whatever matter he is treating that he seems to have no other concern.¹⁰⁴

However, the incursions and depredations of the Lombards increased. It was the period when, to use the words of an inscription of that time, we might say it was necessary to labor *gladios hostiles inter et iras*.¹⁰⁵ The Lombards were imperiling Rome, which lacked troops for its defense and bread to eat. The population was on the verge of discouragement. The Pontiff, who had written in his *Pastoral Rule* that a bishop's first duty is preaching, then mounted the pulpit and read or, when his voice failed him, had someone else read, before the assembled faithful, his famous homilies on the prophet Ezechiel.

St. Gregory's Sermons

The twenty-two homilies on Ezechiel, along with the forty homilies on the Gospels, form St. Gregory's oratorical work. No writings of the fathers were more promptly and universally popular. A large number of the lessons of the liturgical office have been taken from the *Homilies on the Gospels*. St. Gregory's sermons have not the sonorous breadth of St. Chrysostom's or the impulsiveness of St. Augustine's or that critical tone which was St. Jerome's personal characteristic. They did not attain that friendly clearness which accounts for the success of St. Caesarius' preaching; they scorned those literary embellishments in which the delicate taste of St. Gregory

¹⁰⁴ The detailed history of the Churches of Spain, Gaul, and England will be found later in this volume.

¹⁰⁵ "Amid swords and hatreds." De Rossi, *Inscriptiones*, II, 157. *Mosaici*, fasc. 3, 4. This inscription may still be seen near the Basilica of St. Lawrence.

Nazianzen delighted; ¹⁰⁶ but they are so eminently communicative, so living, so pastoral, they are so well adapted to the dispositions of men of that time, that we can understand their rapid popularity. He says:

Often, when I am alone, I read the Holy Scripture and fail to comprehend it. I come into your midst, dear brethren, and suddenly I understand. This sudden understanding makes me desire another. I wish to know who are those persons by whose merits the comprehension comes to me on a sudden. It is granted to me for those in whose presence it is bestowed on me. So, by the grace of God, while the understanding increases within me, pride is lowered. For it is in your midst that I learn what I teach you. I declare to you, my dear children, that most of the time I hear in my ear what I tell you at the very moment when I tell you.¹⁰⁷ All I do is repeat. When I do not comprehend Ezechiel, then I recognize myself; it is indeed I, it is the blind one. When

¹⁰⁶ "I am not at pains to avoid the confusion of barbarisms, I disdain constructions, word order, the cases with prepositions, because I find it supremely unworthy to make the words of the heavenly oracle comply with the rules of Donatus" (*Morals*, preface, chap. 5; *PL.*, LXXV, 516). We should not take these words too literally. While affecting to despise the elegance of profane literature, nevertheless Gregory does not write in a way devoid of all literary merit. Although his writing is not labored, but rather fluent, natural, spontaneous; yet the style of this patrician, who made the acquaintance of classical studies in his youth, and later on, through his official position, mingled in the highest society of Rome and Constantinople, is never banal.

¹⁰⁷ St. Gregory, by these words, seems to allude to a supernatural grace. This is probably what gave rise to the legend of the dove, symbol of the Holy Ghost, speaking in his ear. In support of the historical character of this event, appeal is sometimes made to the testimony of Peter the Deacon, a close friend of St. Gregory. Clausier, *S. Grégoire le Grand*, p. 284. This testimony comes to us in the following manner. John the Deacon, writing about three centuries after the period when the event is supposed to have occurred, relates (*Vita Gregorii*, IV, 69; *PL.*, LXXV, 221 f.) that, according to a tradition of the ancients (*sicut a majoribus traditur*), after St. Gregory's death some of his enemies wished to burn his manuscripts. But it is thought (*creditur*) that Peter the Deacon, his close friend, protested, saying that to do so would be a sacrilege because, said he, "I have often seen the Holy Ghost resting over his head in the form of a dove." And, after saying that he was willing to die in confirmation of his statement, Peter ascended the pulpit with the holy Gospels, and died. To Baronius (*Annals*, year 604) and to the Benedictines of St. Maur (*PL.*, LXXV, 221, note 1), this story seems the more dubious because, they say, "no testimony is adduced from any author by name and because neither St. Ildefonsus nor St. Isidore nor Paterius (a disciple of St. Gregory) alludes to any such event."

I comprehend, then it is the gift of God that comes to me on your account. Sometimes, too, I comprehend the Scripture in secret. At such moments, I weep for my faults; only tears please me. Then am I enraptured on the wings of contemplation.¹⁰⁸

The homilies on the prophet Ezechiel were not finished. The siege of Rome by Agilulf compelled St. Gregory to interrupt them. Furthermore, so many calamities and disturbances led the Romans to question whether the end of the world might not be imminent. Gregory shared these popular apprehensions and became their pathetic interpreter. "Where is the Senate?" he said; "where is the people? All I see are ruined buildings and crumbling walls. . . . Let us despise this present world as a torch henceforth extinct, and let us enter into our earthly desires in the death of the world itself."¹⁰⁹

Like most popular orators, Gregory possessed the gift, at once valuable and dangerous, of feeling keenly in his heart the passions that stirred the crowd of his hearers. This fear of the approaching end of the world and of the coming of the dread Judge, filled his last homilies on Ezechiel. Nevertheless that dread came less from a conviction than from an apprehension.¹¹⁰ It never succeeded in discouraging him. Never did it keep him from laboring for the salvation of his people and for the future of the Church. Even while he was exhorting the faithful to prepare for the end of the world, he was negotiating with the Lombards,¹¹¹ and was interceding with the Emperor.¹¹² A great apologist of the papacy says:

Gregory saw the world falling into ruin, he thought the last days were at hand. Yet he did not decline the labor. He kept Rome from

¹⁰⁸ Homilies on Ezech., II, 2; *PL*, LXXVI, 949.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 6; *PL*, LXXVI, 1010.

¹¹⁰ *Ep.*, V, 36; *PL*, LXXVII, 760.

¹¹¹ *Ep.*, V, 40; *PL*, LXXVII, 765.

¹¹² In any event, that apprehension of the approaching end of the world, which, as the theologians say, affected him only as a private doctor, was never the subject of dogmatic teaching given under the conditions that guarantee papal infallibility.

disappearing; and he planted overseas the seed from which would soon spring a new Catholic people. He strove against the pestilence, against the earthquakes, against heretical barbarians and idolatrous barbarians, against a paganism that was dead and decaying, but not yet buried. He strove against his own body crushed by sickness. We might say that Gregory's soul was the only thoroughly healthy thing in all mankind.¹¹³

In the life of that great man nothing is more remarkable than this: supposing that he was laboring only for the preservation of the ancient world, he became, by the mere fact of performing his duties of state and being obedient to Providence, the initiator of the new times.

St. Gregory Patriarch of the West

Head of the universal Church, patriarch of the West, metropolitan of the Roman prefecture, bishop of Rome, "Gregory gave the world a perfect model of ecclesiastical government."¹¹⁴

As head of the universal Church, we see him repress the budding vanity of the patriarch of Constantinople. As patriarch of the West, he had dependent upon him the metropolitans of Milan, Ravenna, and Aquileia in Italy, all those of Africa, Greece, Gaul, and Spain.¹¹⁵ With firmness and discretion, he everywhere won recognition for the rights of his authority. In Italy he received an appeal of the suffragan bishops of Milan against their metropolitan; in Greece he sustained the rights of the bishops of Thebes against the claims of the archbishops of Larissa; in Africa he vigorously urged the bishops to repress the Donatist heresy; in Gaul and in Spain he was in continuous correspondence with the episcopacy. The most am-

¹¹³ Louis Veuillot, *Le Parfum de Rome*, I, 101.

¹¹⁴ Bossuet, *L'Histoire universelle*, eleventh period.

¹¹⁵ Pingaud, *La Politique de S. Grégoire le Grand*, chap. 4.

bitious of the metropolitans in his patriarchate was the Archbishop of Ravenna. Basing his claim on the fact of the emperors' sojourn in that city and the fact of the exarch's residence there, John of Ravenna arrogated to himself honors that would have raised him above the metropolitans. Toward him Gregory showed himself the most intrepid defender of his hierarchical rights. "You should conform to the practice of all the metropolitans," Gregory wrote to him, "or show a privilege from the pope, if you claim to possess such. . . . I have had a search made through the archives. . . . I have questioned. . . . But nothing have I found that authorizes you to wear the pallium in processions or your deacons to wear the maniple at Rome. You put the honor of the episcopacy in outward show and not in inner virtues."¹¹⁶ Yet the holy Pontiff was at pains to respect, at Milan, the traditions of the Ambrosian Church,¹¹⁷ and his letters to the bishops of Africa indicate his intention of interfering as little as possible in the internal affairs of the dioceses.¹¹⁸ Wherever he can do so without harm to discipline, he effaces his authority. He honors the other patriarchs with extreme delicacy. He wrote to Eulogius patriarch of Antioch:

Your Holiness has told me many things which have been pleasing to me on the see of Peter, prince of the Apostles. I have heard all that the more gladly, since he who speaks thus to me about the see of Peter, does himself occupy the see of Peter. I, who like not honors that are addressed only to me, rejoiced, because, most holy father, you bestow upon yourself what you attribute to me. Although there are many Apostles, only the see of the Prince of the Apostles has obtained the primacy, that see of one only that was established in three places, for Peter exalted (*sublimavit*) the see of Rome where he deigned to rest and to end his earthly life; he honored (*decoravit*) the see of Alexan-

¹¹⁶ *Ep.*, II, 54, 55; IV, 11, 15.

¹¹⁷ *Ep.*, X, 29.

¹¹⁸ *Ep.*, II, 47; VI, 64; VII, 2; VIII, 3.

dria, where he sent his disciple St. Mark the Evangelist ; he established (*firavit*) the see of Antioch, where he lived seven years.¹¹⁹

How well, with this ingenious use of words, he hides his own greatness. The hierarchy is indicated merely by nuances in the expressions "established," "honored," and "exalted," marking three degrees of that see, which is threefold and one, from which the Vicar of Christ governs Christendom.¹²⁰

St. Gregory Metropolitan of Italy

As metropolitan the bishop of Rome, at the close of the sixth century, had under his jurisdiction the suburbicarian provinces: Campania, Tuscany, Umbria, suburbicarian Picenum, Apulia, Calabria, Corsica, Lucania, and Valeria. Over this portion of the Church, which was very especially connected with him, the zealous Pontiff watched with particular care. Three times he assembled his suffragans in provincial councils—in 591, 595, and 601. We have the proceedings of the council of 595 and that of 601. The object of the former was to assure a good supply of priests and a prudent administration of the Churches.¹²¹ The council of 601 was concerned especially with safeguarding a wise independence of the monasteries with regard to the bishops in the election of their abbots and the management of their individual affairs.¹²² With unwearied zeal Gregory saw to the execution of these laws in the dioceses dependent on him.

This great Pope considered it his duty always to respect the freedom of episcopal elections. Says Thomassin: "From a great number of this holy Pontiff's letters it appears that he

¹¹⁹ *Ep.*, VII, 40; *PL*, LXXVII, 899.

¹²⁰ E. Lavisse in *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, December 15, 1886.

¹²¹ Hefele, *History of the Councils*, IV, 426 f.; Mansi, IX, 1226; X, 475.

¹²² Hefele, IV, 431; Mansi, X, 486 f.

never wished to have anything to do in the selection of bishops for vacant sees and that he always preserved for all the Churches the ancient liberty of electing their bishops. . . . But, as Churches often suffered from an extreme lack of subjects capable of bearing the burden of so high an office, this Pope supplied that want and gave them those he was holding as it were in reserve.”¹²³ On such occasions he intervened with remarkable tact. He acted in the same way when the need of the parishes obliged him to provide for some vacant parish appointment in an outside diocese. To Bishop Importunus he wrote: “I venture to believe that your Fraternity will gladly accept what we are doing for the good of your diocese.”¹²⁴

St. Gregory Bishop of Rome

It was particularly as bishop of Rome that Gregory displayed a ceaseless pastoral solicitude. There, in his own diocese, he felt he was a true father, whose office it was to distribute bodily as well as spiritual nourishment. This Roman of the old stock, who considered that he was simply respecting the traditions of his fathers, was in fact a feudal prelate, whose social and political activities, along with his spiritual mission, formed an integral part of his episcopal duties. St. Gregory was very conscious of this social duty. Upon learning one day that a poor man had died of hunger in the city of Rome, Gregory, by way of penance, refrained from celebrating the holy sacrifice for several days.¹²⁵

But his most particular concern was the spiritual welfare of souls. He watched over the conduct of the clergy; so exigent was he in the matter of ecclesiastical learning that Bishop Licinianus of Cartagena wrote to him, saying: “If you require

¹²³ Thomassin, *Ancienne et nouvelle discipline*, III, 471.

¹²⁴ *Ep.*, II, 10.

¹²⁵ John the Deacon, II, 29.

such learning of priests, we shall never find any candidates.”¹²⁶ He was also fond of being in the midst of his Roman people and opening his soul to them in friendly discourse. He re-established and reorganized the custom of the stations, which the disturbances of those times had interrupted. On the occasion of these stations, part of the clergy and the faithful, with the Pope presiding, gathered in one of the Roman churches. There, in the midst of his people, Gregory’s words found their most penetrating accents. It was always a matter of regret to him when the weakness of his tired voice obliged him to have his sermons read by someone else. “The living word,” he said, “moves the heart more than a reading, which requires an intermediary.”¹²⁷ This custom of the stations had a notable influence upon the liturgy. With it was connected the composition of the Sacramentary that bears his name.¹²⁸

Gregorian Chant

The tradition which attributes to St. Gregory the definite fixation of the liturgical chant should be respected. The most recent critical works seem at all points to confirm the statements of St. Gregory’s biographer, John the Deacon. “Like another wise Solomon, moved by the penitential quality and the sweetness of the music, the most zealous of the chanters compiled a very useful Antiphonary. He also formed the *schola cantorum*, which still sings in the holy Church and does so according to the same principles.”¹²⁹ In fact, it is only starting with St. Gregory that any mention is made of the *schola can-*

¹²⁶ *Ep.*, II, 54; *PL*, LXXVII, 60r.

¹²⁷ *Ep.*, VII, 11.

¹²⁸ Duchesne, who attributes the final revision of the Sacramentary to Pope Adrian I, grants that several of the prayers in it go back to St. Gregory. In any event, “it is essentially a stationary Sacramentary.” *Christian Worship*, p. 123. Duchesne’s opinion is opposed by Probst, *Les plus anciens sacramentaires et ordres romains expliqués*.

¹²⁹ John the Deacon, II, 6.

torum in papal documents. What is said by John the Deacon is confirmed by two documents dating from a century after St. Gregory's death: one of these emanates from Venerable Bede, the other from Egbert archbishop of York.¹⁸⁰ John the Deacon declares that St. Gregory presented to the *schola cantorum* several fields and two houses, one near St. Peter's and the other near the Lateran. "There we find preserved," he goes on, "with proper veneration, the authentic Antiphonary, the couch on which he used to chant, and the rod with which he disciplined the boys."

It has been noted that the memory of the musician-pontiff is preserved even in stone. Forty years after him, on the tomb of Pope Honorius, was engraved this inscription: "Excellent pastor in the divine chant, he was the worthy successor of Gregory."¹⁸¹

The saintly Pope, however, never wished to provide for the fine execution of the singing to the detriment of ecclesiastical dignity. The first canon of the Roman Council of 595, proposed by Gregory and acclaimed by the bishops, is worded as follows:

It has long been the custom in the Roman Church to ordain cantors as deacons and, still further, to use them for singing, instead of for preaching and caring for the poor. This has the consequence that, at divine service, more is thought of a good voice than of good life. Consequently no deacon may, henceforth, sing in the church except the

¹⁸⁰ All this evidence, confirmed by the consideration of several circumstances of St. Gregory's life, is set forth in Gastoué, *Les origines du chant romain, l'antiphonaire Grégorien*. Gastoué sees three elements in the origin of the Gregorian chant: the first Hebraic, the second Gnostic, and the third Graeco-Roman. St. Gregory denied that he imported any Byzantine practices into Rome. Jaffé, 1550; *Reg.*, IX, 26 (IX, 12).

¹⁸¹ Gevaert refused to admit that the Gregorian chant goes back to St. Gregory the Great and maintained that John the Deacon, a man of uncritical mind, must have confused Gregory I with Gregory II or Gregory III (*Les origines du chant liturgique de l'Eglise latine*). Dom Germain Morin thereupon defended the traditional view (*L'Origine du chant grégorien*). Cf. Dom Pothier, *Musica sacra*, pp. 38 f.

Gospel in the mass. The remaining lections and psalms shall be sung by subdeacons, or, if it is necessary, by those in minor orders.¹³²

Only a few churches are mentioned as having been built by St. Gregory. As his biographer remarks, he was much more engaged in erecting spiritual than material temples.¹³³ The period of the barbarian invasions was not favorable to the building of churches.

Works of Charity

The most pressing need of that period was the care of the poor. Wars and disasters of all sorts had caused frightful misery. Destitute fugitives, driven out by the Lombards, sought refuge in Rome. A letter from the Pope to Theoctista, sister of Emperor Maurice, tells us that in 593 he had three thousand nuns dependent on him for their sustenance.¹³⁴ Gregory's charity appears at the height of this terrible distress. Through his deacons and by himself he distributed very large alms. At every great feast day and on the first day of each month he presided at the distribution of wheat, wine, vegetables, meat, fish, and clothing.¹³⁵ Says John the Deacon: "The Church had become like a magazine, to which everybody came."¹³⁶ The Pope himself said that these sufferings of the poor and the alms of the rich would be the means of saving the city.¹³⁷

But this charity was not exercised blindly. It was governed by perfect order. Deacons, chosen from among honest and upright men, were in general charge of it: vidames were delegated to provide hospitality in the bishop's name; pious women, called *matriculae* or *mulieres de matriculis*, were placed in

¹³² Mansi, IX, 1226; Hefele, III, 599.

¹³³ Paul the Deacon, *Life of St. Gregory*, chap. 16; *PL*, LXXV, 49.

¹³⁴ Jaffé, 1469.

¹³⁵ John the Deacon, II, 26.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Jaffé, 1469.

charge of charitable institutions.¹³⁸ Several of these hospices received contributions from the public and from the imperial Treasury, and Gregory watched over the regular payment of these contributions.¹³⁹ John the Deacon declares that in his time at the Lateran Palace could be seen a register of all the persons to whom the Pope had made regular distributions.¹⁴⁰

The Papal Patrimonies

Such social needs were an additional reason for Gregory to watch carefully over the proper administration of the papal patrimony. The management of this patrimony, or rather these patrimonies (*patrimonia*) as they were called, is perhaps the masterpiece of St. Gregory's organizing genius. Indications to be found here and there in his letters enable us to reconstruct almost entirely the plan and functioning of this admirable work of social foresight and moral education.

First, we can see the great importance of these patrimonies.¹⁴¹ In addition to the generous gifts of Constantine and the many offerings of the faithful, which had accumulated for centuries past, monasticism had added a considerable contribution. Persons who gave themselves to God began ordinarily by distributing their goods to the poor; often the bishop of Rome was the one delegated to carry out their charitable intentions.

¹³⁸ On the office of deacons, vidames, treasurers, and *mulieres de matriculis*, see Thomassin, *Ancienne et nouvelle discipline*, Part III, Bk. III, chap. 29.

¹³⁹ *Ep.*, VIII, 20.

¹⁴⁰ John the Deacon, II, 30.

¹⁴¹ "In the sixth century the Roman Church possessed a very large number of estates, so that the pope was the wealthiest landowner of Italy. . . . In the time of Gregory the Great the most important of these patrimonies were the one in Sicily made up of two groups, Syracuse and Palermo, and those of the neighborhood of Rome, Appia, Labicanum, Sabina, Careolanum, Germanicanum, and Tuscany. The other patrimonies of St. Peter were, in Italy, those of Bruttium, Calabria, Samnium, Naples, Campania, Picenum, Ravenna and Istria, Liguria, and the hither Alps; beyond the peninsula, those of Corsica, Sardinia, Dalmatia, Gaul, and Africa. Diehl, "L'Eglise au temps de Grégoire le Grand" in the *Atlas historique* (Schrader), map 16.

St. Gregory's correspondence acquaints us with the organization of these *patrimonia* or *massae*. At the head was a steward (*rector*). The Pope reminded these stewards that they were charged, not merely with the management of the property, but with using the revenue in works of charity. To the *rector* of Campania he writes: "Remember that your duty is not limited to the administration of the patrimony, but that I have placed you there to assist the poor."¹⁴² Under the *rector* were the *defensores*, whose duties were rather complex: they were legates whom Gregory in one place calls "soldiers of St. Peter."¹⁴³ In this capacity they assisted in the meeting of councils and, if needs be, admonished bishops in the pope's name. They were also examining magistrates for the conduct of inquiries, police officers who returned fugitive slaves, justices of the peace who summoned to a reconciliation pastors and faithful in case of conflict, legal guardians who took under their protection strangers seeking refuge on the domains of the pope; in short, they were universal executors of the orders of the supreme pontiff.¹⁴⁴ Below the *defensores* were the *tonsuratores*, put in charge of the direct surveillance of the *coloni*. They were not clerics, but were tonsured as a sign of dependence. Gregory reproved them when they encroached upon the functions of the *defensores*.¹⁴⁵ The *conductores massarum* or farmers managed the estates by means of an annual rent. It was especially in watching over their management that Gregory showed he was a most vigilant and capable landowner. The good ones he encouraged by granting them improvement leases which, by attaching them to the soil for three generations, gave greater stability to the families and favored a more prudently productive labor. Such farmers as were open to suspicion he watched over very closely. In districts where thoroughly up-

¹⁴² *MGH, Reg.*, I, 53 (I, 55).

¹⁴³ *Ep.*, I, 36.

¹⁴⁴ *Ep.*, I, 84; III, 89; IX, 20, 22; XI, 37, 38, 71; XII, 28, 29; XIII, 26, 27; XIV, 4.

¹⁴⁵ *Ep.*, IX, 42.

right farmers could not easily be obtained, he replaced the renting plan by direct management, entrusted to priests or monks, who administered the domain in the paternal manner.¹⁴⁶

To all—*rectores*, *defensores*, and farmers—Gregory repeated the same maxims, namely, that the patrimonies were the goods of the poor (*res pauperum*, *bona pauperum*, *utilitates pauperum*), that the thing to be most sought after was, not gold, but eternal justice,¹⁴⁷ that a soldier of St. Peter should fight solely for St. Peter, that is, for justice and truth,¹⁴⁸ and that the treasure of the Church should not be allowed to be stained by selfish manipulation.¹⁴⁹

Gregory was watchful that the revenue be not diverted from its normal use, which was to redeem prisoners of war, emancipate slaves, maintain poor monasteries, at times to grant assistance to some high personage of the Byzantine court who had fallen into poverty, and, by way of exception, to obtain from the barbarians, in default of other means, peace or a truce in return for money payment.

The holy Pontiff's solicitude was extended most especially to poor people, whether *coloni* or slaves, who labored in the sweat of their brow upon the domain of St. Peter.

The *coloni* were a class of men that appeared after Constantine. They were neither slaves nor freemen, but were attached to the land where they labored. Their legal status was regulated by the Christian emperors Valentinian and Gratian. Gregory sought to ameliorate the condition of those living on his lands. He asked that the labor required of each one be apportioned to his strength; he allowed them to marry freely within the bounds of the colony. He granted them the important right of sending their complaints to the Holy See when they considered they were victims of injustice on the part of

¹⁴⁶ See his letter to the farmers of the patrimony of Gaul, *Ep.*, V, 31.

¹⁴⁷ *Ep.*, XIII, 24; *MGH, Reg.*, XIII, 37.

¹⁴⁸ *Ep.*, I, 36; *MGH, Reg.*, I, 39.

¹⁴⁹ *Ep.*, I, 44; *MGH, Reg.*, I, 42.

the farmers or of the *rectores* and *defensores*. In cases of such appeals his decisions were examples of prudent equity. He ordered the *defensor* Scholasticus that a certain *colonus* of the Church of Catania, in accordance with his claim, be paid a just price.¹⁵⁰ In the case of a *colonus* of Sicily, who had been forced to pay twice the legal tax, he ordered that the excess amount and the objects he had pawned be returned to him. And the Pope adds: "Do not forget to return her father's cup to his daughter."¹⁵¹ This cup was probably an object which the daughter especially claimed.

Slavery

Large numbers of slaves were employed on the patrimonies of the Holy See, as well as on the monastery lands and diocesan domains. Slavery was still a legal institution. At Rome itself there was a slave-market. Gregory bought slaves, received slaves as gifts, and sent slaves as gifts to friends.¹⁵² The work of Christian civilization has had reason to be glad of this wise attitude of the Church. On ecclesiastical lands the slaves were regarded as the equal of their master before God. There it was they received the moral training that made them fitted for freedom. Gregory then was eager for them to be freed. Most of the time he considered the wiser procedure would be to have them pass from the status of slaves to that of *coloni*. But when he judged them worthy of leading the life of free men, he freed them completely. In such case he often performed the emancipation ceremony in a church. In accordance with the Justinian Code, this ceremony gave them complete freedom.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ *Ut mercedem sicut dignum est accipiat, secundum laboris modum. Ep., VIII, 32; MGH, Reg., IX, 43.*

¹⁵¹ *Ep., I, 44; MGH, Reg., I, 42. Cui etiam baciolam patris sui restitui volumus.*

¹⁵² *Ep., III, 18; XII, 46.*

¹⁵³ Justinian Code, Bk. I, tit. 13, *De his qui in ecclesiis manumittuntur.*

The letter by which he freed Thomas and Montana, slaves of the Roman Church, begins thus: "Since our Redeemer, the author of every creature, deigned to take human flesh only that He might break the bonds of our servitude and restore the ancient liberty to us, we in our turn can do no better than have pity upon those men whom nature made free and whom the law of nations has made slaves, that we, by emancipating, restore to them the liberty for which they were born."¹⁵⁴ Gregory saw to it that bishops and abbots should treat their slaves with the same gentleness. The Bishop of Ravenna, for acting unjustly toward his slaves, drew down upon himself a vigorous rebuke. The Bishop of Syracuse received a severe admonition because he failed to reprove a landowner who had separated a woman-slave from her children. "If such a thing happens again," says the Pope, "I shall feel obliged to treat the matter sternly and prosecute, according to the canons, not the layman guilty of the injustice, but the bishop who let the deed be committed."¹⁵⁵ And so the fugitive slaves fled to the Church domains. If they were in great want, the generosity of the pastors came to their relief; if they were being unjustly pursued, the ecclesiastical authorities defended them energetically. If they were guilty of nothing more than a slight offense, Gregory wished that they be returned to their masters only after the latter have granted their pardon.¹⁵⁶

Another category of persons began to populate the patrimonies of the Holy See; these were the *commendati* or *clients*. Free men fleeing before the Lombards, came and placed themselves under the protection of the Church, *se commendare Ecclesiae*. Gregory charged the *defensores* with the patronage of these new subjects. The words patronage, protector, recom-

¹⁵⁴ *Ep.*, VI, 12; *PL*, LXXVII, 803 f.

¹⁵⁵ *Ep.*, IV, 12; *PL*, LXXVII, 681 f.

¹⁵⁶ *Ep.*, III, 1; *PL*, LXXVII, 604. *Si vero venialem culpam commiserint, dominis suis, accepto de venia sacramento, sine mora reddantur.*

mendation, defense (*tuitio, commendatio, defensio*) come more and more into use. It is the beginning of feudalism.¹⁵⁷

We have just used the word "subject" in connection with the pope. It is not yet quite justified. However, the patrimony of St. Peter, as constituted under St. Gregory, is almost a state. "By the growth and administration of the patrimonies, Gregory the Great was laying the foundations of the temporal power, that was established when the papacy became freed from the imperial authority."¹⁵⁸

Papal Supremacy

Gregory was also a forerunner of the Middle Ages by the authority he exercised over the converted barbarian races and their Churches. According to the views of Harnack and Fustel de Coulanges, from the fifth to the ninth century no properly so-called papal supremacy existed, with regard to the Christian kings or even the national Churches. According to these historians, the power of the popes came from the outside and, so to speak, from the social framework in which the Church was situated. So long as the framework of the Roman Empire lasted, the papacy profited by it, then it profited by the powerful centralization accomplished by Charlemagne, but between those two political régimes there was, we are told, a veritable interregnum of the papal authority. "At that time," says Fustel de Coulanges, "Rome held a pre-eminence, not a power, . . . the

¹⁵⁷ Salvian had remarked this fact in the midst of the invasions. He says: "The weak give themselves to some powerful person, so that the latter may defend them." *De gubernatione Dei*, V, 8. But the importance of the papal lands and the people's confidence in the goodness of the Supreme Pontiff accelerated this movement and made it general. It took place in spite of the resistance of the jurisconsults, because, as Fustel de Coulanges says, "the Roman law, which had been created by the state, could not admit an institution that was the opponent of the state. . . . Under the Roman Empire, therefore, patronage and clientage were extra-legal institutions." "Les origines du système féodal" in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, August 1, 1874.

¹⁵⁸ Diehl in Schrader's *Atlas*, map 16.

Christian Church was then a federation of cities, of Churches, each of which was a little monarchy.”¹⁵⁹ And Harnack maintains that in the Merovingian period the juridical primacy of the bishop of Rome did not exist. Therefore it must be that it was not essential to the Church, that it had its basis in external circumstances, and St. Gregory the Great in no wise exercised it.¹⁶⁰

These assertions will best be answered by the simple account of the Christian origins of France, England, Germany, and Spain.¹⁶¹ For the present let it suffice for us, in opposition to the two illustrious historians, to cite the contrary statements of the learned author of the *History of Rome in the Middle Ages* and the eminent editor of the *Liber pontificalis*. Says Grisar:

At the same time we must beware of exaggeration, and not insist unduly on the crisis through which Rome had then to pass. Rome dealt, without any great display of effort, with the problems presented by a world in decay.

The bishops of the Church were educated as Romans, so far as the times allowed of any education whatsoever, her missionaries, too, made their settlements real nurseries of Roman civilization. Canon Law was cast in the mold of Roman jurisprudence, and, under the Church's influence, Roman law found its way into the codes of the new nations. Everywhere the Church's representatives laid stress on the need of union with Rome, the metropolis, which, thanks to Peter's keys, was more than ever, and in a far higher sense, the capital of the world.¹⁶²

Duchesne says that the power of the popes, such as exercised by St. Gregory VII, “is guaranteed not only by right but by

¹⁵⁹ Fustel de Coulanges, *Histoire des institutions politiques de l'ancienne France. La monarchie franque*, p. 522.

¹⁶⁰ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, II, 149 ff.

¹⁶¹ See *infra*, pp. 156–287.

¹⁶² Grisar, *History of Rome*, III, 340.

tradition," especially the tradition that goes back to St. Leo and St. Gregory the great.¹⁶³

It is true that Gregory always considered himself a faithful and loyal subject of the Roman Empire of Byzantium. "If the popes," says Grisar, "were unswervingly faithful to the imperial conception now incorporated in Byzantium, this was out of respect for tradition and for old-established right and was therefore a result of that conservative spirit which so strongly characterized their rule, and which the Church even fostered on religious grounds."¹⁶⁴

But we have seen that the Pope opposed Emperor Maurice when the latter encroached upon the rights of the Church. It is true that in 602, when the adventurer Phocas had himself proclaimed emperor after slaying Maurice and his family, Gregory sent the new ruler a letter of felicitation upon his elevation. But the Pope had been informed of that revolution only by the letters of Phocas himself and of Empress Leontia.¹⁶⁵ Gregory's death soon afterward prevented his protesting against the crimes of Phocas as he had done against the encroachments of Maurice.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome*, p. 107. Vaes concludes a study on the *Papauté et l'Eglise franque* with the following lines: "We rightly conclude that the precise and special features of the relations of the papacy with the Frankish Church in the time of Gregory corresponds to a real power of the Roman see, exercised without contest over Frankish Christendom." *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 1905, p. 783. A study on the Churches of England, Germany, and Spain would lead to the same conclusions.

¹⁶⁴ Grisar, *op. cit.*, III, 338.

¹⁶⁵ John the Deacon, IV, 20.

¹⁶⁶ In this connection St. Gregory has sometimes been accused of flattery and servility toward the Emperor. We are asked how it was possible for a pope to congratulate on his elevation a sovereign who reached the throne by assassination. Precisely because such an act would be despicable, we must not lightly attribute it to St. Gregory. The most likely hypothesis is that the Pope did not know the truth about the elevation of Phocas or that the news reached him only by way of vague rumors, which did not enable him to see the deception in the Emperor's official letter. News took a long time to come from Constantinople to Rome. In the middle of the ninth century, the author of the note on Pope St. Nicholas, inserted in the *Liber pontificalis*, had not yet learned of the assassination of Emperor Michael the Drunkard

Heresies

On the question of papal supremacy, Gregory I's policy paved the way for that of Gregory VII, and it laid down the principles in which Innocent III would find his inspiration in the repression of heresies. No one has more clearly affirmed the right possessed by the Church to judge heretics, and the duty of the state to repress them as disturbers of the social order.¹⁶⁷ From St. Gregory we have the following words, which might easily be misapplied by a faulty conception of religion and which the Middle Ages inserted in the *Decretum Gratiani*: "that the torture of the body should serve at least to obtain the good health of the soul."¹⁶⁸ He wishes punishment to be meted out to those who, in the patrimony of St. Peter, have fallen into Manichaeism, so as to restore them to the Church.¹⁶⁹ He urges the African bishops to prosecute the Donatists, and encourages the exarch of Africa to repress them vigorously. According to an expression often found in his writings, heretics are "spiritual lepers" who contaminate the flock of the faithful.¹⁷⁰ Yet, from several passages in his writings and from his general way of acting, it seems that he meant these principles to be applied only to heretics in bad faith.¹⁷¹ Gregory recognized that "purity of heart may exist in those who maintain perverse doctrines"; in such cases, he says, we should act toward them with much gentleness.¹⁷² Even

and the fall of Photius, which took place thirteen days before the death of St. Nicholas. The official news of these events, which occurred in September, 867, did not reach Rome, according to Duchesne's calculations, until the spring of 868. *Lib. pont.*, II, 172 note 80.

¹⁶⁷ *Quod in religionem divinam committitur, in omnium fertur injuriam*. Justinian Code, I, 5, *de haereticis*; *MGH, Reg.*, VIII, 4.

¹⁶⁸ *Ep.*, IX, 65; *MGH, IX*, 204; *Decr. Grat.*, XXVI, q. 5, c. 10.

¹⁶⁹ *Ep.*, V, 8; *MGH, Reg.*, V, 9; *Ep.*, VIII, 18; *MGH, Reg.*, VIII, 19; *Ep.*, III, 62; *MGH, Reg.*, III, 59.

¹⁷⁰ *Ep.*, I, 74.

¹⁷¹ *Morals*, V, 11; XVI, 50; XVIII, 26; XXXV, 18.

¹⁷² *Sunt qui cordis quidem puritatem habent, sed tamen doctrinae eorum dogmata perversa suscipiunt*. *MGH, Reg.*, XI, 28.

in the case of the most ill-willed he thinks that severity is not always the most suitable policy and that "often it is better to tolerate the evil patiently."¹⁷³

He mistrusted men of extreme rigor, fiery or fanatical. In St. Gregory's time there were in Rome many such impetuous champions of the good cause, who by untimely zeal against heresy sought to acquire a reputation for orthodoxy whereas they were no better than the heretics they were denouncing. The wise Pontiff placed no reliance upon those false brethren, for, as he said, they had not the spirit of Christ.¹⁷⁴ Gregory applied these principles to the Donatists, the Manichaeans, the infidels, and especially to the Jews, who at that time were to be found in large numbers in the cities of Italy and even in Rome. There they frequently practiced usury, and the angered population at times engaged in violent retaliation against their synagogues, their private houses, or their person. Again and again the Pope intervened to have their synagogues respected.¹⁷⁵ He sharply rebuked the Bishop of Terracina, who had disturbed the Jews' freedom of worship and violated their property.¹⁷⁶ He protested against the zeal of a neophyte who annoyed the Jews at their prayers.¹⁷⁷ He was indignant upon learning that some people wanted to force certain Jews to be baptized.¹⁷⁸ All he ventured to do was to order compensation paid for the material damage that might have resulted for converted Jews from the hostility of their former coreligionists. He granted them a partial release from their taxes.¹⁷⁹ Fur-

¹⁷³ *Quaedam conpescendo, quaedam tolerando mitigare . . . quaedam mansuete corrigere, quaedam vero quae corrigi nequeunt aequanimiter tolerare. Ep., XI, 46.*

¹⁷⁴ *Quia vero sunt multi fidelium, qui imperito zelo succenduntur et saepe, dum quosdam quasi haereticos insequuntur, haereses faciunt. Ep., XI, 45.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ep., IX, 6; I, 10; IX, 55.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ep., I, 35.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ep., IX, 6.*

¹⁷⁸ *PL, LXXVII, 710.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ep., V, 8.* This letter contains an expression which, in St. Gregory's mind, in all likelihood did not have the significance given it by Cardinal Ximenes in Spain and Madame de Maintenon in France, who thus considered they had good authority

thermore, he saw to it that the Roman law was observed, which forbade Jews to own Christian slaves.¹⁸⁰

The Church of the Middle Ages followed these wise traditions. Facing the unpopularity of formulas, she never hesitated to proclaim clearly that the truth alone has rights and that the Catholic Church alone possesses the truth in fulness. But, out of regard for the rights of conscience, the Church as a whole showed, even in favor of her worst enemies, a respect for the human person, which was rarely practiced toward her by those who separated from her while making a banner of the words "tolerance" and "liberty."

Death of St. Gregory

But the great Pontiff's health kept declining. Since 598 he was obliged to remain confined to bed almost continually.¹⁸¹ In January, 604, mastering a painful exhaustion, he dictated a last letter to Theodelinda queen of the Lombards, to felicitate her upon the peace which King Agilulf had just accorded to Italy and upon the baptism of a young Lombard prince.

Two months later, thinking perhaps that the Empire and the world were going to disappear soon after him, but aware that he had performed his duty to the very end, he rendered his soul to God on March 12, 604. As Bossuet says: "This great Pope had instructed the emperors, consoled Africa, strengthened in Spain the Visigoth converts from Arianism, converted England, reformed Church discipline in France, appeased the Lombards, saved Rome and Italy, repressed the pompous vanity of the patriarchs, enlightened the whole

for advising methods of conversion that were far from the spirit of the Gospel. "If it happens that Jews come to us with a doubtful faith, at least their children will be baptized in the true faith." *Etsi ipsi minus fideliter veniunt, hi tamen qui de eis nati fuerint jam fidelius baptizantur.*

¹⁸⁰ Code, Bk. I, title 10.

¹⁸¹ Letter to the patrician Venantius.

Church by his doctrine, governed both the East and the West with no less vigor than humility.”¹⁸² Further, all these things he had accomplished with apostolic zeal in the name of a social justice of which he considered himself the responsible defender; he had brought words of justice, right, and liberty to the ears of the emperors, exarchs, Lombard kings, bishops, abbots, and peoples, as no one had done before him. “My ministry,” he wrote, “obliges me to hasten wherever justice requires.”¹⁸³ To the exarch Gennadius he said: “What I wish is to make justice and freedom flourish together, *ut possit florere cum libertate justitia*.”¹⁸⁴ He ordered the councils in Sicily to meet annually “to come to the relief of the oppressed.”¹⁸⁵ “The kings of the nations,” he said, “are masters of slaves, but he who rules the Romans should be a master of free men. Whatever you do, first of all safeguard the rights of justice, then respect the rights of freedom. Give to those who are subject to you the liberty that your superiors give to you.”¹⁸⁶ Therein was “the great voice of the popes of the Middle Ages becoming, when the soul of the nations was still sleeping, the living conscience of the world of the spirit, perceiving and following with eagle-eye the acts of emperors and kings, of nobles and bishops.”¹⁸⁷ The breath that animated the words we have been quoting is already the breath of chivalry and of the Crusades.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸² Bossuet, *L'Histoire univ.*, Part I, eleventh period.

¹⁸³ *Ep.*, I, 37; *MGH, Reg.*, I, 35.

¹⁸⁴ *Ep.*, I, 61; *MGH, Reg.*, I, 59.

¹⁸⁵ *Ep.*, VII, 363.

¹⁸⁶ *Ep.*, X, 51.

¹⁸⁷ Edgar Quinet, *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. III, *Le christianisme et la Révolution française*, p. 102.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. *Ep.*, IX, 48; *MGH, Reg.*, IX, 34; *Ep.*, IX, 55; *MGH, Reg.*, IX, 55; *Reg.*, IX, 4, 5, 16; Jaffé, 1558, 1577, 1540, 1709, 1528, 1529, 1578. On St. Gregory, see Francesco Tarducci, *Storia di san Gregorio e del suo tempo*.

CHAPTER III

From the Death of St. Gregory to the Coming of St. Zachary (604-741)

For a century and a half the supreme pontiffs seemed to have no other task than to continue the work of St. Gregory the Great. The first popes after him, Sabinianus (604-606), Boniface III (607), Boniface IV (608-615), Deusdedit (615-618), and Boniface V (619-625), in the comparative tranquillity left them by outward events, were especially engaged in developing the disciplinary and liturgical work of the great Pontiff. The task of those coming afterward would be to carry on his dogmatic work and his social policy. The Monothelite dispute, starting with Pope Honorius (627-638), ended with an impressive declaration of the spiritual authority of the papacy; and the strifes stirred up by the emperors, from Leo II (682-683) to Zachary (741-752), in connection with the Quinisext Synod and Iconoclast heresy, would be the Holy See's occasion to manifest the supremacy of its temporal power.

Pope Sabinianus (604-606)

Sabinianus, whose pontificate lasted about two years, and Boniface, who occupied the Holy See less than nine months, were, like Gregory, trained in the papal diplomatic service.¹ The former had been nuncio at Constantinople to Emperor

¹ Sabinianus, born in Tuscany, had been nuncio to Constantinople, at the court of Emperor Maurice. Boniface, a native of Rome, had represented the Holy See at the court of Emperor Phocas.

Maurice, the latter to Phocas. The *Liber pontificalis* says of Sabinianus that "he opened the granaries of the Church and sold wheat to the people, giving three bushels for one solidus."² But the people, who could not forget the generosity of the late Pope, were perhaps not well satisfied with this distribution of food which they must pay for. In fact, a popular legend, recorded by John the Deacon, relates that Pope Gregory, appearing one day to his successor, found fault with him for not being charitable enough and, when unable to make him change, struck him on the head and thus caused his death.³

Pope Boniface III (607)

Boniface III⁴ reaped the fruit of St. Gregory's peaceful diplomacy with Phocas, and of his firm attitude toward the patriarch of Constantinople: the *Liber pontificalis* tells us that he obtained from the Emperor the acknowledgment "that the see of Blessed Peter should henceforth be regarded as the head of all the Churches, in opposition to that of Constantinople, which made claim to the same title."⁵ But, whether because the Pope lacked the energy to keep the acquired result or because circumstances thwarted his efforts, the satisfaction given to the claims of the Roman See was only momentary.

Pope St. Boniface IV (608-615)

Boniface IV,⁶ who occupied the papal see for six years, had to defend and develop St. Gregory's liturgical work. The note in the *Liber pontificalis* says that "he obtained from Phocas the temple called the Pantheon and turned it into the Church of St. Mary and All the Martyrs."⁷ This is the first known in-

² *Lib. pont.*, I, 315.

³ Paul the Deacon, *S. Gregorii magni vita*, chap. 29; *PL*, LXXV, 58.

⁴ Boniface III was a Roman.

⁵ *Lib. pont.*, I, 316.

⁶ Boniface IV was born in what is now the diocese of Pescara. His father was a doctor named John. *Lib. pont.*, I, 317.

⁷ *Lib. pont.*, I, 317.

stance of a Roman temple changed into a church.⁸ But it is not quite exact to say—as was long believed, because of certain misinterpreted texts of Bede, of Rabanus Maurus, and of the Martyrology of Ado—that on that occasion Boniface IV instituted the feast of November 1 in honor of all the saints.⁹ Under Boniface IV a liturgical dispute arose in Gaul over the Irish custom of celebrating Easter, a custom brought into Gaul by St. Columban. When the latter was accused of falling into the Quartodeciman schism,¹⁰ he sent to the bishops of Gaul and, in 606, to the Pope himself a written defense of his practice. He asked for the continuance of a custom, the grounds for which had been set forth to Pope Gregory. The reasoning must have been satisfactory. We have not Boniface's reply, but evidently it was favorable to St. Columban, because the holy abbot kept his liturgical practice without ceasing to remain in communion with the Roman See.¹¹

And so the authority of St. Gregory, continuing after his death, appealed to by the people and by great saints, was able to sustain the weakness of his successors, who were less clear-sighted or less energetic.

Sergius Patriarch of Constantinople

But even that authority did not always suffice. In the pontificate of Boniface IV, in 610, there was elected patriarch of Constantinople a young deacon of that city, Sergius by name,

⁸ *Idem.*, note 3.

⁹ On this question, see Dom Quentin, *Les martyrologes historiques du Moyen Age*, pp. 638 ff. Dom Quentin says: "The origin of All Saints remains obscure. . . . The feast was in existence at the beginning of the ninth century. Does the document of 775 refer to a custom existing in Italy or simply to a private devotion? It does not seem that this little problem can be settled at the present time."

¹⁰ The Irish celebrated Easter according to the computation of Sulpicius Severus, whereas the Gauls followed the computation of Dionysius the Little; the Irish custom might bring Easter on the fourteenth day after the new moon. Hence the charge brought against it, that it shared in the error of the Quartodecimans.

¹¹ Mabillon, *Analecta Bened.*, I, 253, 261; Hefele, art. "Colomban" in Wetzer and Welte, *Kirchen-Lexikon*.

who stirred up long and painful strifes in the Church. It is related that, on the day of his consecration, he cast himself at the feet of the great miracle-worker of the East, Theodore the Syceote. The saint embraced him and said: "My son, God has laid this burden upon you who are so young, that you may have the greater strength to endure the misfortunes threatening you."¹² But the young Byzantine Patriarch did not correspond with God's designs upon him. Dazzled by his precocious elevation and relying too much on human means, which his fertile mind suggested to him, Sergius was more statesman than churchman. By resorting to diplomacy and intrigue for the pacification of the Empire, he would profoundly afflict the Christian world.

Seven months after Sergius' consecration, there ascended the throne of Byzantium the young son of an exarch of Africa, Heraclius. This was in October, 610. Having reached the sovereign power, like Phocas, by the murder of his predecessor, the new *basileus* for thirty years gave the world the spectacle of a soul often capable of heroism, but ever shifting and feverish, with a temperament active but not steady, passing from indolence to restlessness, from restlessness to apathy. Such a man was a valuable and powerful tool in the hands of the energetic Sergius.

Pope Honorius (625-638)

A few years later, after the pontificates of Deusdedit (615-618) and Boniface V (619-625),¹³ which were marked by important liturgical and disciplinary reforms,¹⁴ the govern-

¹² The life of Theodore the Syceote was written shortly after his death by George Eleusios.

¹³ Deusdedit was a Roman, says the *Liber pontificalis* (I, 319), the son of the subdeacon Stephen. Boniface V was a native of Naples (*Lib. pont.*, I, 321).

¹⁴ The first successors of St. Gregory tended to increase the privileges of the monks to the detriment of the clergy. Deusdedit reacted against this tendency and, says the *Liber pontificalis*, "brought back the priests to their former positions." *Lib. pont.*,

ment of the Church of Rome and of Christianity passed into the hands of Honorius. He was born in Campania, the son of the Consul Petronius, and occupied the Apostolic See for twelve years (625–638). The *Liber pontificalis* praises his benevolence and his zeal for the education of the clergy.¹⁵ Jonas of Bobbio,¹⁶ who saw him at Rome, praises the sagacity of his mind and the extent of his learning, and says that he himself was powerfully attracted to him because of his humility and gentleness. Those qualities, however, did not keep him from falling into the snares prepared by Sergius and from giving the Church the scandal of a momentary defection.

Monothelitism

Sergius, Heraclius, and Honorius were the first personages involved in that great dispute of Monothelitism which would last half a century, a dispute in which we see one pope yielding, not in the faith, but in the government of the Church, then a pope dying for his faith, and finally a pope bringing victory to the faith and to his sovereign authority in a general council.

The defection of Honorius, the martyrdom of St. Martin I, and the holding of the Sixth Ecumenical Council by St. Agatho are the three outstanding episodes of that dispute.

The theological controversy, from which it all started, was not a matter of mere Byzantine subtlety. At the end of the sixth century, the Christological question, which had so stirred the Church, was almost settled and defined in its main lines. After the Council of Nicaea (325) that so clearly affirmed the absolute divinity of Christ, and the Council of Constantinople

I, 319. Boniface promulgated important rules about the formalities of wills received by ecclesiastical notaries, about the right of sanctuary, and about the prerogatives of acolytes. *Lib. pont.*, I, 321 note 1.

¹⁵ *Lib. pont.*, I, 323.

¹⁶ On Jonas of Bobbio, see *Hist. litt. de la France*, III, 603 f. His testimony is found in his *Vita S. Bertulfi*; *PL*, LXXXVII, 1063.

(381) that so energetically defended His perfect and integral humanity, the Council of Ephesus (431) defined the unity of His person, and the Council of Chalcedon (451) the duality of His nature. But a secondary problem remained. In the concrete reality of Christ, God and man in one single Person and in two natures, were there one or two wills, one or two activities? The question might and should have been discussed exclusively in the schools of theology, where, moreover, it would easily have been settled in the sense of the duality of the activities; political interests turned it into an external and clamorous strife.

Upon ascending the throne, Heraclius found the Empire in a lamentable situation. Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia were open to the Persians by the taking of Daras. The capture of Edessa in 609 put the Christian East in extreme danger. The new Emperor was dismayed, but remained inactive. Apparently nothing could draw him out of his apathy, neither the capture of Caesarea in 611 and of Damascus in 613, nor the pillage of Jerusalem in 614, nor the burning of the Anastasis Basilica and the carrying off of the true cross—momentarily saved by the devotedness of a Christian, then snatched from his hands and carried off with the booty of the Persian king.¹⁷

Heraclius, in despair, thought of withdrawing to Carthage with his treasures, which he had already loaded on his ships.

Sergius Patriarch of Constantinople

The energetic intervention of Patriarch Sergius changed the face of things. Making himself the spokesman of a popular movement, which in fact he himself had provoked, he brought Heraclius into a church and made him swear to live and die in the midst of his people.

From that moment on, Heraclius was transformed. He

¹⁷ Labourt, *Le christianisme dans l'empire perse*, pp. 232 f.

raised three armies. By means of two of them he withstood the Avars and the Bulgarians, whom Chosroes II had won to his side. At the head of the third army, he marched toward Persia. He had the Croats and Serbs accompany him. Persia was invaded, Chosroes was overcome in a battle near Ninive, then declared deposed by the notables of his kingdom, imprisoned in his palace, and assassinated by his son Siroes, who was proclaimed king. The new monarch promptly concluded peace, giving back all the conquests of the Persians and restoring to Heraclius the wood of the true cross.

When, in September, 628, the victorious armies made their entry into Constantinople, with the singing of psalms, carrying the miraculous images to which they attributed the victory, Emperor Heraclius was acclaimed as savior of the Empire and of Christianity; but, except in the official acclamations, everybody spoke the name of the Patriarch Sergius, the real author of that triumph.

Sergius, being a wise statesman, did not let himself be dazzled. Of what use would so brilliant a triumph be if the results of the victory could not be assured? In reality the peoples of the Empire were divided. The scattered fragments of Monophysitism formed so many religious groups, ready to be changed into political groups. Acephali of Cyprus, Paulianists of Egypt, Severians of Alexandria, who were still called Phtartolatrae, because they adored in Christ a real flesh, and Julianists of Syria, called also Aphthartodocetae because they did not believe in the reality of the body of the risen Christ: who could say whether all these factions might not some day unite in a formidable coalition against the Empire? Already the Monophysites of Egypt affected the use exclusively of the national Coptic language and called themselves Coptic Christians; and the Monophysites of Armenia, or Jacobites, as a clear indication of their political opposition, gave to the Catholics, as did the Egyptian Monophysites, the name of Mel-

chites, that is, partisans of the emperor. The danger was particularly threatening in the provinces recently conquered from Persia.

For several years past Sergius had perceived the danger and, being an unscrupulous statesman, had considered removing the peril by a dastardly maneuver. Recent scholarship no longer has much doubt but that the clever Patriarch fabricated out of whole cloth, in the very first years of his pontificate, a pretended letter from his predecessor Patriarch Menas, which would serve as a basis for his whole campaign.¹⁸ Then, when he had prepared the way by underhand schemes, he persuaded the Emperor to enter upon negotiations with the dissident religious groups. He thought he had found a basis of understanding. To the Monophysites it would be granted that in Christ there was only one activity, *μία ἐνέργεια*.

In 626 began a politico-religious campaign, with Sergius as its heart and soul, as he was the soul of the military campaign against the Persians. Heraclius negotiated with Cyrus, the Monophysite bishop of Phasis, with Athanasius the patriarch of the Jacobites of Antioch. It was Sergius who dictated the conditions of this last agreement; it was he who directed the conferences between Cyrus and the Church of Armenia;¹⁹ and he showed himself so broad that, in the presence of his concessions, the most fiery of Severus' partisans cried out: "It is not we who are going to the Council of Chalcedon; it is the Council of Chalcedon that is coming to us."²⁰

The appearance at Constantinople of a Palestinian monk, renowned for learning and virtue, suddenly disturbed Sergius' plans. The monk Sophronius, from the monastery of St. Theodosius in Jerusalem, had already in 633, at the time of the negotiations with the Monophysite Church of Armenia, pro-

¹⁸ Hefele, *Hist. des Conc.*, III, 11; Hergenröther, *Kirchengeschichte*, I, 669; Pargoire, *L'Église byzantine*, p. 158.

¹⁹ Pargoire, *loc. cit.*

²⁰ Mansi, XI, 561-568.

tested in the name of the orthodox faith. When the agreement had been concluded despite his efforts, he came to Constantinople to implore the Patriarch to be watchful over the maintenance of the integrity of the faith.

Sophronius had a mystical, poetic soul. He was well known through his *ἀνακρεόντεια*, poems in anacreontic form and of purely religious inspiration, through his sermons, through his collaboration in John Moschus' legends of the saints, but especially through his eminent holiness.²¹ Of a sudden he appears as a profound theologian and mighty controversialist.

In the presence of this dread foe, Sergius hesitated. He considered it prudent, at least temporarily, to alter his tactics. No longer was there mention of one energy or of two energies. Against an opposition that he felt was formidable on the part of men like Sophronius, he needed merely to win to his cause the supreme authority, that of the pope. To the Supreme Pontiff the Patriarch Sergius wrote a very clever letter, filled with lying insinuations and decisive affirmations: that expression "two energies" or "two wills" was a great scandal to the faithful, he said, by suggesting to them the idea of an internal conflict in Christ; the formula adopted by the Monothelites, on the contrary, had pacified the whole Empire. Moreover, it was in perfect conformity with tradition: not a single Church father, he said, had taught the doctrine of two wills; that of one single will was current, as the letter of Menas would prove.²² Honorius let himself be circumvented. This "humble, gentle" man, as his contemporary Jonas calls him, undoubtedly erred by excessive condescension; but quite likely, as Hefele thinks,²³ his fault was owing mostly to ignorance. He failed to perceive the theological import of the question; he did not take into account the political scheming of Sergius. He replied:

²¹ See the works of St. Sophronius in *PG*, Vol. LXXXVII.

²² This letter is to be found complete in Mansi, XI, 530 f. Hefele gives excerpts from it in his *History of the Councils*, V, 27-29.

²³ Hefele, *loc. cit.*

We have learned that the monk Sophronius has started new disputes over words. . . . We acknowledge that the divine Master Jesus Christ is the author of divine operations and of human operations . . . but, because of the ineffable union of the divine nature with the human nature, . . . we confess one single will. . . . Furthermore, whether it is proper to suppose one or else two energies, is an idle question that we leave to the grammarians who, to attract youth to their schools, sell them formulas of their own invention.²⁴

This letter of the Pope has not all the exactness we might desire. May it not be that the oneness of will, which Honorius speaks of, was in his intent a simple moral oneness? ²⁵ However this may be, Rome's answer was interpreted as giving approval to Sergius and his party, which began to be called the Monothelite (μόνον θέλημα, one will) party.

St. Sophronius

Just when the Pope's answer reached Constantinople, there was also received there a long letter from Sophronius. The lat-

²⁴ *Novas vocum quaestiones cognovimus introductas per Sophronium quemdam, tunc monachum . . . confidentes dominum Jesum Christum operatum divina, media humanitate Verbo Deo naturaliter unita . . . eundemque operatum humana. . . . Sed propter ineffabilem conjunctionem humanae divinaeque naturae . . . unam voluntatem fatemur domini nostri Jesu Christi . . . utrum autem propter opera divinitatis et humanitatis, una an geminae operationes (ἐνέργεια, in the Greek text of the council) debeant derivatae dici vel intelligi, ad nos ista pertinere non debent, relinquentes ea grammaticis qui solent parvulis exquisita derivando nomina ventitare.* Mansi, XI, 537-542.

²⁵ This interpretation seems to follow from the passage in which Honorius gives, as a reason for the unity of will, that the Word took a human nature not stained by sin, of which the will consequently adhered to the divine will to the point of forming only one with it (Mansi, IX, 630). This is quite true, but the question then was about moral unity. However, certain other passages seem to indicate that he intended speaking of a physical unity, as the theologians say, that is, a real unity. Honorius reasons thus: Where there is a single person, there is a single actor, a single will; for unity of person and unity of will, he says, are essentially correlatives. Honorius forgets that in the Trinity there are three persons and yet not three wills. Theology already supposed this principle, that the will is specifically connected with the nature and that the person is merely its center of attribution. At bottom, as Honorius avows, he wished to avoid raising quarrels; he was afraid of appearing Eutychian by affirming one will, Nestorian in affirming two wills. But neither equivocation nor silence settles a real difficulty, once it is proposed.

ter meantime had been elected patriarch of Jerusalem; this document was his first synodal letter. With admirable logic, force, and clearness, and taking his stand on theological reasoning and on tradition, the new Patriarch set forth the doctrine of the two wills. His chief argument was the need of safeguarding in Christ the integrity of His humanity. "If that humanity of Christ," he said, "was raised in one sense above men, it is not in this sense that it was mutilated or lessened, but in this sense that God freely became man and that, being man, He willed whatever there was human, not by necessity or constraint, but by His own good pleasure."²⁶ To take the will from this humanity of Christ, or to absorb it in the will of God, was therefore, in the mind of Sophronius, to commit an error like that of the two Apollinarises, who cut off from that humanity the superior part, the spirit, the *voûs*.

Pope Honorius wrote a second letter. This was less emphatic in the sense of Monothelitism, at least so far as we can judge from the fragments we have of it. The Pope makes a distinction between the works of the divinity and those of the humanity. He says: "The divine nature operates in Christ what is divine; the human nature, what is of the flesh." But he continues the prohibition against using the words "one energy" or "two energies," "one will" or "two wills."²⁷

The Pope was obeyed. Sophronius died shortly afterward, with an aureole of holiness which the Church soon confirmed. The mass of the faithful, the crowd of those whom passion did

²⁶ PG, LXXXVII, 3147 f.

²⁷ With Hefele, we must admit that Pope Honorius, in a document that did not have the import of a dogmatic definition, did not express any heterodoxical doctrine and that "it would be unjust to charge him with heresy." But "a too persistent concern to preserve peace, added to a defect of clearness, made him reject the truly orthodox expression and thereby led him to favor heresy" (Hefele, *Histoire des conciles*, III, 42). He then exposed himself to be later called heretical; the word "heretic" was not then reserved to persons who taught heresy, but was applied to all who, directly or indirectly, in a manner more or less occasional, might have contributed to the birth or the spread of a heresy or a schism.

not blind and whom government pressure did not dominate, instinctively turned to the doctrine that best safeguarded the integrity of the human faculties of the God-man. There circulated from hand to hand a collection of 600 texts of the Church fathers, which the holy Patriarch of Jerusalem had collected before his death and which unanimously testified against Monothelitism.²⁸

Then it was the obstinate Patriarch of Constantinople decided to employ a supreme means of action, which he was keeping in reserve for a long time. In 638 he had published by the Emperor, who gave it the force of an imperial edict, a dogmatic thesis of which he himself was the author. It was the *Ecthesis* (ἐκθέσις, profession of faith).

This edict forbade the preaching of one energy or two energies in Christ, but it proclaimed one single will and prescribed that only one will must be admitted. A synod, which met at once at Constantinople, acclaimed the *Ecthesis*: all the Eastern patriarchs subscribed to it, and Sergius, meanwhile stricken by death in 639 shortly after Pope Honorius, could say as he was dying that Monothelitism had conquered.

But this stroke of daring and of authority had a result precisely contrary to what its authors expected. Rome opened its eyes. From that hour there was, on the part of the supreme pontiffs, a resistance that never deviated and that went even to martyrdom. Popes Severinus, John IV, Theodore I, and Martin I were the heroes of this struggle.

The imperial edict prescribed that no papal election would be confirmed until the pope-elect subscribed to the *Ecthesis*. Severinus²⁹ refused to sign it, and one of his first acts was to

²⁸ Mansi, X, 895 f. This collection of St. Sophronius is now lost. But we can see another collection of passages of the fathers in favor of the *dyothelism* in the works of St. Maximus. *PG*, XCI, 267 ff.

²⁹ The *Liber pontificalis* tells us nothing of his origin except that he was a Roman (p. 328).

anathematize Monothelitism. John IV,³⁰ as soon as he was enthroned, repeated his predecessor's anathema. Heraclius was terrified and, shortly before his death (February 16, 641), declared that he had nothing to do with the writing of the *Ecthesis*, which was exclusively the work of Sergius. Theodore I,³¹ finding himself in the presence of the two emperors, Constantine III and Heracleonas, who seemed peacefully disposed, tried to bring them to the Catholic faith, but, a few months later, when Constantine had been poisoned and Heracleonas expelled, the dreadful Emperor Constans II ascended the throne.

Clergy and faithful, more and more enlightened by the events, courageously gathered about the Roman See. Not merely from the West, but from the East as well, now more and more undeceived, there came expressions of adherence to the faith of the See of Peter. From Cyprus and from Palestine in 643 came indignant protests against the trickery of the Byzantine heresy.³² The successor of Sergius, Patriarch Pyrrhus, having resigned his see and being disillusioned, for a time returned to the Catholic faith.³³ From Constantinople there came to Rome one who would take up the good fight of St. Sophronius, with equal ardor and deeper learning, Maximus the Confessor.

St. Maximus the Confessor

Born about 580, of a noble Byzantine family, former chief secretary of Emperor Heraclius, Maximus, whom posterity would honor with the name of Maximus the Confessor and

³⁰ He was a Dalmatian, and his father Venantius was *Scholasticus*, that is, a lawyer (*Lib. pont.*, I, 330). Du Cange, *Glossarium*, see the word "Scholasticus."

³¹ Theodore was a Greek by birth. His father, a native of Jerusalem, had been a bishop. *Lib. pont.*, I, 331.

³² See the letters of Sergius of Cyprus and Stephen of Dora in Mansi, X, 900, 913-916.

³³ *Lib. pont.*, I, 332.

whom the Church would place on her altars, had renounced earthly honors in 630 and made his religious profession in the monastery of Chrysopolis on the shore of the Bosporus. He had been seen in 633 at Alexandria, at the time of the negotiations between Sergius and the Monophysites, taking up the defense of the true faith at the side of St. Sophronius. He it was who, in a memorable conference held in Africa, the acts of which are preserved,³⁴ had shaken the convictions of Pyrrhus, former patriarch of Constantinople, and brought him to confess the doctrine of the two wills.

Under these circumstances, Constans II, even though attached to the Monothelite heresy, did not think he could maintain the Ecthesis. He replaced it, in 648, by another decree, called the Type (τύπος, rule). It was henceforth forbidden to dispute, not only about the two energies, but about the two wills, and that under the severest penalties. But Maximus was not caught in this new trap.

Pope St. Martin I (649-655)

There had just been elected to the Roman See, in 649, a pontiff of stalwart soul, Martin I.³⁵ As a priest he had been conspicuous for learning and virtue. As apocrisiary at Constantinople he had been in a position to appraise the tortuous policy of the patriarchs and the emperors. Encouraged, assisted, and inspired by Maximus, he convened, in October, 649, the famous Lateran Council at which five hundred bishops, under his presidency, anathematized the Ecthesis, the Type, and Monothelitism entirely, with its leaders, followers, and accomplices, Sergius, Cyrus, Pyrrhus, and Honorius.³⁶

³⁴ These acts are very detailed. They may be found in Mansi, X, 709-760, and *PL*, XCI, 287-354. Hefele gives a complete summary of them in *Histoire des conciles*, III, 62-79.

³⁵ He was born at Tudertum (Todi) in Tuscany, and had been legate at Constantinople. *Lib. pont.*, I, 336.

³⁶ Mansi, IX, 1157 f.; Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, no. 272.

The Emperor's displeasure was now unbounded. It turned upon the Bishop of Rome, Martin I, upon his intrepid counselor Maximus, upon the principal spirits of the resistance. Before the meeting of the Lateran Council, the exarch Olympius, ordered to force the Type on the Pope, or to seize him, had failed wretchedly. The exarch Calliopas was more successful. He invaded the Lateran Church and palace, seized the sick Pope, embarked secretly on the Tiber the night of October 18, 653, and then for almost a year led him from prison to prison, from the coasts of Calabria to Naxos, from Naxos to Constantinople. Condemned, September, 654, on the testimony of suborned witnesses, as a usurper of the Holy See, traitor to the Emperor, accomplice of the Saracens, and blasphemer of the Blessed Virgin, Pope Martin was deported to the Chersonesus and there, overwhelmed by ill treatment, exposed to all the horrors of cold and hunger, he left this world December 15, 654. The Church honors him as a martyr.³⁷ Maximus the Confessor likewise suffered martyrdom for his faith. Arrested with two of his disciples (the monk Anastasius and the apocrisary Anatasius), he was sent to Bizya on the Black Sea, then to the fortress of Perberis at the extremity of the Empire, then brought back to Constantinople. His tongue was torn out, his right hand cut off, he was beat with whips while being led through the city; lastly he was cast into a prison located at the foot of the Caucasus, and there he died on August 13 of the same year. His two disciples underwent the same tortures.

The blood that was shed for the true faith bore fruit. The tombs of the martyrs became places of pilgrimage. In the Chersonesus people went in crowds to pray near the remains of Pope St. Martin. A feeling of sympathy for the victims swept through the Christian world.³⁸ Constans II halted on

³⁷ *Lib. pont.*, I, 338; Mansi, X, 851-854; Leclerc, *Les martyrs*, IV, 234-245.

³⁸ At the end of the eighth century (in 787), a letter from Gregory II to Leo the Isaurian states that pilgrimages to the tomb of St. Martin continue to be frequent and obtain miraculous cures. *Beatum esse Martinum testatur civitas Chersonis, in quam*

the path of persecution. The most determined and fiery characters become powerless when faced by a profound movement of public sentiment. Popular opinion declared itself on the side of the martyrs, which was also that of doctrinal good sense and logic. Pope Eugenius,³⁹ elected during the exile of St. Martin I, was able with impunity to declare himself in favor of the doctrine of the two wills.⁴⁰ In the pontificate of his successor Vitalian,⁴¹ the Emperor decided to come to Rome to negotiate the peace there. His intentions were not so disinterested as they appeared. Constans, critically endangered by the Arabs and unpopular at Constantinople, sought to establish the center of his government in Italy and dreaded opposition on the part of the pope. The latter did not refuse him the honors due to the imperial majesty. But, shortly afterward, while at Syracuse, Constans II received the punishment of his crimes and his bad faith: he was assassinated in his bath by one of his servants (October, 668). His successor, Constantine IV (668–685) maintained good relations with Popes Adeodatus (672–676) and Donus (676–678).

Constantine IV, surnamed Pogonatus or the Bearded, was one of the greatest emperors of Byzantium. Attacked on all sides, obliged to fight against one of his own armies, which set up a rival, besieged for several years in Constantinople by the Arabs, harassed by bands of Bulgarians on his frontiers, he withstood all these dangers. The execution of the usurper Miziz, the defeat of the Arab fleet by the use of Greek fire, which is said to have been invented by the Syrian Callinicus,⁴² the ceding to Bulgarian hordes of the region thereafter called

relegatus est, et Bosphori totusque septentrio et incolae septentrionis, qui ad monumentum ejus accurrunt et curationes accipiunt. Mansi, XII, 972.

³⁹ He was born in Rome, on the Aventine Hill, and had been a cleric since boyhood, *clericus a cunabulis*. *Lib. pont.*, I, 343.

⁴⁰ *Lib. pont.*, I, 341.

⁴¹ He was a native of Campania. *Lib. pont.*, I, 343.

⁴² According to Hesselung (*La civilisation byzantine*, p. 151), Callinicos did nothing more than perfect a means of defense known for centuries past.

Bulgaria, gave outward peace to the Empire. The Emperor thought of establishing religious peace, in concert with Pope Donus, and later with Pope Agatho.⁴³

Pope St. Agatho (678-681)

Agatho, a Sicilian by birth, occupied the Apostolic See two years and six months. According to his contemporaries, "he charmed everyone by his gentleness and smiling good-nature."⁴⁴ The acts of his pontificate show that he was also a man of wisdom, and his virtues would place him in the ranks of the saints. The Pope and the Emperor soon agreed. Agatho convened several preparatory provincial councils. Then, in the middle of the year 680, at the close of a Roman synod, he sent to the Emperor legates who were bearers of a letter in which the Pontiff, after affirming the doctrine of the two wills in Christ, said: "Consider therefore, most clement prince, that the Lord and Savior of all, from whom the faith comes, having promised that Peter's faith should not fail, told him to confirm his brethren. And so, as everyone knows, the Apostolic Pontiffs, predecessors of my infirmity, have never failed in this duty."⁴⁵ This last phrase, written forty years after the death of Pope Honorius, on the eve of the council that would anathematize him, is remarkable; it declares that none of the Roman Pontiffs, therefore not even Honorius, failed in his duty as pope.

Council of Constantinople (680)

September 7, 680, in the great cupola hall of the sacred palace, under the honorary presidency of Emperor Constantine IV

⁴³ The letter written to Pope Donus reached Pope Agatho, who had been elected in the meantime.

⁴⁴ *Tantum benignus et mansuetus fuit ut etiam omnibus hilaris et iocundus comprobaretur. Lib. pont., I, 350.*

⁴⁵ *Quod apostolicos pontifices meae exiguitatis praedecessores confidenter fecisse semper, cunctis est cognitum. Hardouin, Acta conciliorum, III, 1079-1083.*

and the active presidency of the papal legates, who directed the discussions, met the council which was the Third Council of Constantinople and the Sixth Ecumenical Council. Its acts are preserved in the original Greek text and in two ancient Latin translations. The discussions concerned solely the question of Monothelitism. It was soon clear that the sophism on which the Monothelite error attempted to base its doctrine was a confusion between *subordination* of the human will to the divine will, and *absorption* of the human will in the divine will. Macarius of Antioch, the spirited champion of the oneness of will, declared: "How can you admit the possibility of a conflict of two wills in Christ? That would be to divide Christ in two. As for me, I prefer to be cut into pieces and cast into the sea rather than admit such a doctrine." ⁴⁶ Sophronius had already given definite answers to these questions. They were now repeated, but without success. The council deposed the obdurate Patriarch.

Then, when the discussions were concluded, in the seventeenth session, the one before the last, the fathers of the council voted a dogmatic decree, as follows: "We declare that there are two natural *θελήματα* ⁴⁷ and two natural energies in Christ. The two natural wills are not opposed to each other—God forbid—as the impious heretics said, but His human will followed, and it does not resist and oppose, but rather is subject to, the divine and almighty will." In the eighteenth and last session were voted the following anathemas: "Therefore we punish with excommunication and anathema Theodore of Pharan, Sergius, Paul, Pyrrhus, and Peter, also Cyrus, and with them Honorius, formerly Pope of Rome, as he followed them (*καὶ σὺν αὐτοῖς Ὀνώριον τὸν τῆς Ῥώμης ἡγούμενον ὡς ἐκείνους ἐν τούτοις ἀκολουθήσαντα*)."⁴⁸ "We anathematize the inventors of the new

⁴⁶ Mansi, XI, 350-358.

⁴⁷ *Θέλημα* means rather the volition, or act of the will, than the will, or power of willing.

⁴⁸ Mansi, XI, 665.

error . . . and also Honorius, who did not attempt to sanctify this Apostolic Church with the teaching of Apostolic tradition, but by profane treachery, permitted its purity to be polluted.”⁴⁹

Pope Honorius Anathematized

These anathemas voted by an ecumenical council against a pope as a heretic, seemed so unlikely to Pighi, Baronius, and several other historians, that they called into question the genuineness of the passages relative to Honorius. Honorius' name, ΟΝΩΡΙΟΝ, they say, must have been read in place of ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΝ (Theodore), the name of the patriarch who was convicted of Monophysitism. This explanation is not tenable. The evidence of different manuscripts and the multiplicity of the allusions to Pope Honorius, which we find in the earliest documents, does not allow any doubt as to the authenticity of the text that we have just quoted.⁵⁰ We should, however, remark—and this will suffice to show that the dogma of papal infallibility is quite beyond attack on this score—that nowhere is Pope Honorius condemned as having taught heresy *ex cathedra*. The solemn approval, voted by the fathers of the council, of Pope Agatho's letter in which it is said that none of his predecessors failed in the duty of confirming his brethren in the faith, would, if need there were, corroborate this interpretation.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Mansi, XI, 733.

⁵⁰ Hefele, *History of the Councils*, V, 170 ff.

⁵¹ The fathers of the council, when transmitting the acts of the council to Pope Agatho, wrote as follows: “We willingly leave what should be done to you, as occupying the first See of the Universal Church and standing on the firm Rock of the Faith, having read through the writings of the true confession sent by Your Paternal Highness to our most religious Emperor; which we recognize as divinely written from the chiefest Head of the Apostles, and by which we have put to flight the dangerous opinions of the heresy which lately arose.” Quoted from Sidney H. Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, p. 282. [Tr.] Cf. Mansi, XI, 683. Of most important significance to clarify the “question of Honorius,” is a fact often overlooked, that, in the whole course of the Monothelite dispute, the faith of the Eastern as likewise of the Western Church in the indefectibility of the see of Peter

Thus ended the last of the great Christological heresies.⁵² The East, where most of them originated, had witnessed the meetings of all the great councils that condemned them. The patriarchs of Byzantium, by rising up against Catholic orthodoxy, had merely increased the spiritual authority of the bishops of Rome. We shall see that the emperors, by attacking the person and territory of the popes, made the popes' temporal power clear to all and strengthened it more than ever.

is affirmed as strongly as ever. Honorius' yielding in no way disturbed it. It was not felt to be affected by the Pontiff's deplorable weakness. In 643, five years after Honorius' death, Sergius bishop of Cyprus wrote to Pope Theodore: "You are Peter . . . destroyer of profane heresies . . . doctor of the orthodox and spotless faith" (Mansi, X, 913). Three years later, the bishops of Africa, then a Byzantine province, wrote to the same Pope: "Your apostolic see has received by divine decree the office of examining and inspecting the holy dogmas of the Church" (Mansi, X, 921 f.). In 648, Sophronius of Jerusalem led Stephen of Dora to Calvary and said to him: "Swear to me that you will go at once to the apostolic see where are the foundations of the orthodox doctrine" (PG, LXXXIV, 314). Cf. *Bolland.*, II, 65 f. Other citations might easily be adduced. We merely add that the fathers of the council that condemned Honorius said, in an address to the Emperor: "The supreme head of the Apostles assisted us. It was Peter who spoke by Agatho" (Mansi, XI, 665). At the close of the council, it was before Pope Leo II that Patriarch Macarius and his condemned friends wished to plead their case (*Lib. pont.*, I, 354-359).

On the question of Honorius, see especially Hefele, *op. cit.*, V, 176 ff., and Hergenröther, *Kirchengeschichte*, Vol. II. See also Weil and Lot, *La cause d'Honorius*, original documents. For the complete literature of this question, which gave rise to the publication of a large number of writings at the time of the Vatican Council, see Chevalier, *Répertoire des sources historiques du Moyen Age*, I, 2174.

⁵² A few stubborn Monothelites took refuge in the Lebanon Mountains. Were they the ancestors of the Maronites? Such is the declaration of St. Germain of Constantinople and of the Nestorian patriarch Timotheus in the eighth century (PG, XCVIII, 82; Labourt, *De Timotheo I patriarcha*, p. 18), of Theodore Abukara in the ninth century and of Eutychius of Alexandria in the tenth century (PG, CXI, 1078, 1091, 1095 f., etc.). But the valiant Maronite nation, so jealous of the purity of its Catholic faith, so proud of having defended Christendom against the Saracens with indomitable courage, denies such a heritage. And in fact learned scholars like Faustus Nairon (*Dissertatio de origine Maronitarum*), Simon Assemani (*Bibliotheca orientalis*, Vol. II), Wouters (*Hist. eccles.*, II, 425) have contested the conclusions that are drawn from the ancient authors. The view that the Maronite nation is descended from Monothelite heretics has recently been maintained by Pargoire (*L'Eglise byzantine*, p. 169) and by Wailhé (*Échos d'Orient*, 1906, pp. 257 f., 344 f.), who appeals to St. John Damascene (PG, XCIV, 143). This view has been opposed by Archbishop Debs, the Maronite archbishop of Beirut (*Échos d'Orient*, V, 285).

Emperor Justinian II

In passing from the hands of Constantine IV to those of Justinian II, the imperial power experienced a decline. Justinian II was a detestable emperor. Presumptuous and unskilful, he passed the years of his reign dreaming of stupendous enterprises and meeting with the most complete reverses. Of all his misadventures the most humiliating came to him from his religious policy. Infatuated with the title of supreme pontiff, which his official canonists pretended to justify by alleging that it legally appertained to his pagan predecessors, Justinian II took seriously, even tragically, those titles of "doctor of the orthodox faith," "arbiter of heaven and earth," which were showered on him by the flattery of his courtiers. To defend the orthodox faith, he revived the bloody edicts which the pagan emperors long before issued against the Christians, he subjected to torture and punished at the stake the Manichaeans in conformity with the laws of Emperor Diocletian.⁵³ The immoderate zeal of the Eastern monarch was not satisfied with defending the existing dogmas by fire and sword, he presumed to add to them.

The Quinisext Synod

To complete the work of the fifth and sixth ecumenical councils, which he considered insufficient, Justinian, on his own authority, convoked another general council which, because of its claim to be a continuation of the fifth and sixth councils, was called the Quinisext (*quinisextum*) Council or Penthect Council (*πενθέκτη*). It is known also as the Trullan Council or the Council in Trullo from the name of the palace where it met. From its very start the Latins nicknamed it *Synodus erratica*, to indicate that it could not claim rank in the series of lawful synods and councils of the Church. Of the 102 canons of this

⁵³ Petrus Siculus, *Historia Manicheorum*, chap. 27 (PG, CIV, 1281 f.).

pseudo-council, several betray the purpose, not only of emphasizing certain practices peculiar to the Eastern Church, but even of imposing them upon the Universal Church. Such were the prescriptions regarding the marriage of priests and deacons, the Lenten fast, abstaining from the blood of animals. Canon 36 seemed to place the see of Constantinople on a par with the see of "Old Rome."

But what was especially repugnant to Christian conscience was the attempt to force the acceptance of the Byzantine regulations under the severest penalties.

Excommunication was pronounced against such of the Roman laity as fasted on the Saturdays in Lent, and dismissal was the penalty for any clerk guilty of a similar practice. Deposition was also the penalty incurred by any priest or deacon refusing to cohabit with his wife, as well as by those who denied the lawfulness of such cohabitation. It is clear from what we have seen that even the pope—indeed, I may say, especially the pope—was attainted with such threats of deposition. Refusal to accept the Byzantine ruling in place of the ancient customs of the Roman Church, would warrant the pope's being dispossessed of his see and of his sacerdotal dignity.⁵⁴

Pope St. Sergius (687–701)

It was the year 692. For five years past the Holy See had been occupied by Pope Sergius I. After the very short pontificates of Leo II (682–683), Benedict II (684–685), John V (685–686), and Conon (686–687), each of which lasted scarcely a year, interrupted by much disturbed interregnums, Sergius was elected amid scenes of tumult. In opposition to him, popular factions set up two rivals, the archpriest Theodore and the archdeacon Paschal. The former submitted. Paschal, a turbulent and obdurate character, was imprisoned in a monastery in consequence of plots in which, so it was alleged,

⁵⁴ Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome*, p. 141.

certain suspicious practices of sorcery were involved. He died impenitent.⁵⁵ The popularity which sustained Sergius from the outset against the claims of the two antipopes, was increased by the disfavor into which the latter had fallen. He felt himself fortified by that general esteem. The Romans, who had seen him, in the *schola cantorum*, mount all the steps of the ecclesiastical hierarchy,⁵⁶ then, when he became a priest of the title of St. Suzanna, zealously devoting himself to the regular service of the Roman cemeteries,⁵⁷ knew him and valued him long since. By the very force of events the power of the papacy continued to grow under his immediate predecessors, although their pontificates were short and therefore little suited to big undertakings.

The imperial militia of Rome, the *exercitus Romanus*, which for some time the emperors had failed to pay,⁵⁸ became indigenuous, almost entirely unconnected with Constantinople. The imperial military force even at Ravenna, in the presence of the growing discredit of the exarch, followed the trend of public opinion, detached itself from the Empire, and joined itself to Rome. Throughout the Italian peninsula, in fact, and even beyond,

the peoples were seeking in the Church the support they needed. Against governors' vexations or Lombard attacks they had no more reliable defenders than their bishops, especially the Roman pontiff. And so, from the whole Byzantine East, from the towns of Italy, from the islands of the Mediterranean, and even from Africa the people solicited the protection of the bishop of Rome. . . . Between the representatives of the emperors and the pope, their choice was made

⁵⁵ *Lib. pont.*, I, 371 f.

⁵⁶ *Quia studiosus erat et capax in officio catelenae, priori cantorum pro doctrina est traditus . . . et acolitus factus, per ordinem ascendens . . . presbiter ordinatus est. Lib. pont.*, I, 371.

⁵⁷ *Hic tempore presbiteratus sui impigre per cymiteria diversa missarum sollemnia celebrabat. Lib. pont.*, I, 371.

⁵⁸ *Lib. pont.*, I, 320 note 1.

in advance. In the seventh century Rome knew in reality no other sovereign than the pope.⁵⁹

Plan to Seize the Pope

In the presence of Justinian's bold undertaking, Sergius was conscious of his strength, as he was of his rights. He refused to sign the acts of the pseudo-council, although the Emperor sent them to him for the very purpose of obtaining his signature to them. The imperial autocrat's anger was beyond bounds. Immediately orders were issued to the protospatharius Zachary, the exarch, to seize the Pope and bring him to the Bosphorus. Was there to be a repetition of the scenes attending the martyrdom of St. Martin, or would the Pope be intimidated and yield? As Justinian probably anticipated, neither of these happened. Scarcely were the people apprised that a military force was advancing to seize the Bishop of Rome, when an uprising *en masse* took place. The imperial troops at Ravenna, reinforced by the garrisons of the Pentapolis and neighboring regions, hastened to join the popular movement and came to Rome to defend the Pope.⁶⁰ Zachary's small band of soldiers was panic-stricken and dispersed. The only thing left for the protospatharius to do was to rush to the papal apartments. There he was found, all atremble, crouching under the Pope's bed, sobbing and entreating the Pontiff to spare his life.⁶¹ The Pope's magnanimity saved him from the fury of the multitude and let him flee to Constantinople. There he could report to his most mighty emperor that he had met in Italy a protection more effective than the emperor's, the protection of the Roman pontiff.

As though the imperial haughtiness must suffer, blow after blow, the worst humiliations, shortly afterward Justinian was

⁵⁹ Diehl, *Étude sur l'administration byzantine dans l'exarchat de Ravenne*, de 568 à 751, pp. 334 f.

⁶⁰ *Lib. pont.*, I, 373.

⁶¹ *Zacharias spatarius, perterritus et trepidans . . . in cubiculo pontificio tremebundus refugiit, deprecans lacrimabiliter ut sui pontifex misereretur, nec permitteret quemquam ejus animae infestari. Lib. pont.*, I, 373.

dethroned by the patrician Leontius, who exiled him to the Chersonesus, after cutting off his nose. When Justinian recovered the imperial power, of his own accord he abandoned those canons of the Quinisext Synod which had displeased Rome. To preserve something of his legislative work, he entered upon negotiations with Pope John VII and Pope Constantine I. But it was now the turn of the pontiffs to show him the superiority of their power. The emperors had to wait until the end of the eighth century to see Roman approbation give the force of law "to such canons of the Quinisext Council as were not opposed to the orthodox faith, good morals, and the decrees of Rome."⁶²

The successors of Sergius continued to exercise and develop their protective mission over Rome and Italy. John VI (701-705) halted a Lombard invasion;⁶³ John VII (705-707) received from Aribert, king of the Lombards, as a donation the patrimony of the hither Alps;⁶⁴ Sisinnius (708) was engaged in repairing the walls of Rome;⁶⁵ Constantine I (708-715) took charge of the city police;⁶⁶ Gregory II (715-731) resumed the work begun by Sisinnius for the defense of Rome.⁶⁷ Under Gregory II fresh encroachments by the imperial authority and new acts of violence enabled the papacy to manifest more emphatically than ever its temporal authority over Italy.

Leo the Isaurian

Says Theophanes the Confessor, a Byzantine chronicler of the time: "In 726 Emperor Leo, the impious, began to make

⁶² Expressions of Pope John VIII when, at the end of the ninth century, he confirmed the limited approbation given to the council in 786 by Adrian I. Mansi, XII, 982, 1079.

⁶³ *Lib. pont.*, I, 383 and 384 note 2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 385 and 387 note 8.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 388.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 389, 392.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 396.

a discourse on the overthrowing of the holy and venerable images." ⁶⁸ Leo III the Isaurian, having become emperor in 716 in the midst of a period of veritable anarchy, showed that he was a statesman of the highest order. He may rightly be considered the reorganizer of the Byzantine Empire.

In proscribing the worship of images, was he influenced by contact with Mohammedanism and Judaism? Was he merely yielding to a personal schismatic tendency, derived in childhood from the midst of the terrible sect of Paulicians? Those heretics, springing from Manichaeism and related to Marcionism, had, at the beginning of the sixth century, terrorized Syria, Armenia, and Mesopotamia, setting fire to churches and demolishing the sacred icons. Or was he simply ambitious to extend to matters of the sanctuary the reform which he was proud to have accomplished in military, administrative, and social affairs? Certainly he did not foresee the consequences of that iconoclast dispute which would occasion the definite rupture of Constantinople from Rome and would bring about the alliance of the Holy See with the Franks.

Gregory II, by his firm and paternal rule, won the friendly gratitude of the peoples of Italy. Thus far he had enjoyed friendly relations with the Byzantine emperor, as he had with the king of the Lombards. But, upon receiving Leo III's edict ordering him to remove the images, under the penalty of losing his title of bishop of Rome, ⁶⁹ he protested and, by letter to the Emperor, signified his refusal to obey an order contrary to his conscience. ⁷⁰ This solemn protest was the signal for a general uprising in Italy. The population of the Pentapolis and the troops of Venetia rejected the Emperor's decree and an-

⁶⁸ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, PG, CVIII, 816.

⁶⁹ *Lib. pont.*, I, 464.

⁷⁰ Duchesne thinks that the two letters of Gregory II to Emperor Leo, which figure in the collections of councils, are not authentic. They contain such anachronisms and confusions that a pope or even any Roman of the period could not have written them. "They must have been fabricated at Constantinople by some defender of images to supplement the genuine letters." *Lib. pont.*, I, 413 note 45.

nounced that they would fight for the defense of the Pope. The Byzantine government officers were driven out and new leaders were chosen. The people cried: "Anathema against the exarch, against the one who sent him, against those who obey him."⁷¹ Exhilaratus the duke of Naples vainly tried to bring Campania into obedience. It was learned that he spoke of assassinating the Pope: at once his house was assaulted by the mob, and he was put to death along with his son.⁷² The Lombards joined in the movement. They united with the Romans, according to the expression of the *Liber pontificalis*, "as with brothers by the chain of faith, asking merely that they might meet a glorious death fighting for the Pontiff."⁷³ There was even question of electing a new emperor and conducting him to Constantinople. Then it was that the Pope intervened a second time to save the Emperor and perhaps the Empire. While thanking the people for their attachment, Gregory II exhorted them to obedience and, by his prayers and admonitions, gradually restored peace.

There was a brief revival of the quarrel under Gregory III (731-741) who, from the first days of his pontificate, protested against the iconoclast heresy.⁷⁴ But Pope Zachary (741-752), who took possession of the Holy See after the death of Leo the Isaurian and just before the coming of Constantine V (Copronymus), received from the new Emperor assurances of peace.

Constantine V, who would so violently revive the iconoclast war in the interior of the Empire, gave up any idea of violating consciences in those regions where he felt he was henceforth powerless. In fact, as Hergenröther says: "The authority of the Holy See was now at its height in the West, whereas the

⁷¹ *Lib. pont.*, I, 404.

⁷² *Op. cit.*, I, 405.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 415.

imperial power was there visibly lessening, and whatever was left of it was owing to the pope.”⁷⁵

However, was the danger of a schism removed? No, it was merely postponed. Under the last sovereigns of the house of Heraclius, political and religious conceptions had experienced an evolution. The cosmopolitan ambitions of Justinian II were abandoned. The thought of propagating the Byzantine rites at Rome was given up. Those rites became isolated in the Greek world. But more than ever they wanted to bind the government to a national church. Henceforth the popes found themselves confronted, not so much by a Roman Empire of the East, as by a Greek Empire, and not so much by a Greek Empire as by a Greek Church. The monarch was called *basileus* and *autocrator*; but he began to prefer the title *isapostolos* (like the Apostles).⁷⁶ “It was then not race but the faith that made a Roman of Byzantium: from whatever people he might be sprung, it sufficed to enter the pale of the Church in order to enter that of the state; orthodox baptism conferred citizenship.”⁷⁷ The schismatic spirit, in a different but no less sure manner, continued to spread and still threatened, for a more or less distant future, a rupture with the Church of Rome.

But, on the other hand, a new alliance seemed possible to the Church, an alliance with the barbarians. In the very midst of the iconoclast conflict and the disturbances caused by the Lombards, Gregory III appealed to the duke of the Franks, Charles Martel. The latter had at his disposal considerable forces in Gaul, and his princely protection had been highly valued by St. Boniface in Germany. But at the time he could not promise the Pope any effective assistance. From that time on, however, the idea of appealing to the Franks was not forgotten. One of the presents which Gregory III sent to Charles

⁷⁵ Hergenröther, *Kirchengeschichte*, II, 51.

⁷⁶ Constantine had already taken this title. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, Bk. IV.

⁷⁷ Rambaud, *Hist. gén.*, I, 202.

Martel in 739 was the keys of the tomb of the holy Apostles. Was not this expressive of the hope that some day the leader of the Franks, either himself personally or through some one of his race, would be constituted the defender of that tomb? ⁷⁸

⁷⁸ In itself the gift of these *claves confessionis cum vinculis sancti Petri*, spoken of by the Chronicle of Fredegarius (chap. 110), was not, as might be supposed, a symbol of homage and submission. It was merely a question of "reliquary-keys," containing a piece of the chains of St. Peter. A specimen is in the treasury of the Holy Cross at Liège (Reussens, *Archéologie*, I, 103). But the fact of sending this present by an embassy is significant, and in the object itself Charles Martel was able to see a symbol.

PART II

THE CHURCH AMONG THE BARBARIANS

CHAPTER IV

The Barbarian World

"THE man of God, Bennet," says St. Gregory the Great, "being diligent in watching, rose early up before the time of matins (his monks being yet at rest) and came to the window of his chamber, where he offered up his prayers to almighty God. Standing there, all on a sudden in the dead of the night, as he looked forth, he saw a light, which banished away the darkness of the night and glittered with such brightness that the light which did shine in the midst of darkness was far more clear than the light of the day."¹ The whole world was the field reserved by Providence for the zeal of the Benedictine monks. They journeyed through its length and breadth as missionaries, enlightened it as scholars, at times governed it as statesmen.

At the time of St. Benedict's vision, that is, following upon the fall of the Western Empire, the sternest patriots of Rome at length began to comprehend that the *orbs romanus* was not the universe. From all directions new races had crossed the frontiers, sometimes by slow infiltrations, sometimes by brutal and bloody invasions. In Italy were to be found the Heruli mingled with the Rugians; in Africa were the Vandals; in Spain the Suevi and the Visigoths; in old Gaul, the Visigoths, the Burgundians, the Franks, and the Britons; in England, the Britons and the Anglo-Saxons: in the region of the North Sea, the Frisians and the Saxons; between the Vistula and the Elbe, the Slavs.²

¹ *Dialogues*, Bk. II, chap. 35.

² Moeller, *Histoire du Moyen Age*, pp. 74 ff.; Schrader's *Atlas historique*, map 15, note by Paul Guiraud.

Whence came these peoples? Graeco-Roman antiquity knew nothing of them. For a long while the Greeks supposed the world ended at the Danube. Beyond that was the land of the Hyperboreans, the polar region, peopled with darkness and ghosts. The most learned of the old Greek historians, Herodotus, was evidently not acquainted with the course of the Danube, for he places its source in the Pyrenees Mountains. The Romans, at least in the time of Tacitus, suspected that beyond their frontiers moved a whole unknown world. In the first zone of that *terra ignota* was a race of barbarians whom they knew only too well, the Germans, those half-clad, blue-eyed warriors of gigantic stature, whom they had seen fighting and facing death. Beginning with the time of Marius, these Germans had to be reckoned with. But, thought the Romans, that race formed merely a sort of cordon around the Roman world. Beyond was that land of the yellow amber spoken of by Tacitus, the land of the Chauques; then, farther to the north, the mysterious region where men had horses' feet and ears so long that they covered the whole body.³

Such were the illusions. In reality, around the Roman world were three zones of barbarians, occupied by three different races: Germans, Slavs, and Mongolians.

The first zone, Germany, included the region extending between the Danube, the Rhine, the North Sea, and the Vistula. It was the country of those hardy soldiers who had driven back the legions. A migration of this race had peopled Scandinavia. Later on they extended beyond that region; their life of seacoast fishermen altered their domestic and political institutions at the same time that it toughened their physical constitutions.⁴ The Romans never had any contact with the

³ Kurth, *Les origines de la civilisation moderne*, I, 61.

⁴ H. de Tourville, *Histoire de la formation particulariste. Origine des principales nations modernes*.

Scandinavian branch of the German race. Those were the men they spoke of as having horses' feet and enormous ears.

The second zone, east and north of Germany, was the country of the Slavs. They were unsettled tribes, ever on the move, ever engaged in warfare and raids. They occupied the region between the Vistula and the Don.

The third zone, still farther east, embraced the Mongols, the Huns, the Avars, the Magyars, the Turks, and others. Even more savage, more nomadic, more cruel than the Germans, they had more than once been seen, riding their swift horses, on the southern frontiers of Europe. Like a living wedge, they later pushed into the very midst of the Germanic and Slavic races, into Hungary and, even to our own time, continue to be a source of disturbance and instability in that region. Their original country was east of the Ural Mountains and reached to the Altai Mountains in central Asia.

The Germans and the Slavs belonged to the race which modern ethnographers call Indo-Iranian or Aryan. The Mongols and the other yellow-skinned groups living in their vicinity, belonged to a special race usually called the Ural-Altaic race.

The Church reached each of these peoples, one after the other. At the close of the fifth century she converted the Franks; a hundred years later the Anglo-Saxons; then, in the course of the eighth century, the Alamanni, the Bavarians, the Thuringians, and the Saxons; lastly, during the first half of the ninth century, the peoples of Scandinavia. All the principal nations of the Germanic race were by that time won to the Gospel. During the second half of the ninth century, Christianity was preached to the Slavs of Moravia and passed from there to the Slavs of Russia. Only the Ural-Altaic race then remained unevangelized. The group of Hungary received the Christian faith in the tenth and eleventh centuries; but the groups in Asia were not seriously affected until the

Dominican and Franciscan missions in the thirteenth century and especially, in the sixteenth century, the preaching of St. Francis Xavier and his disciples.⁵

For the present we are concerned only with the conversion of the peoples of the Germanic race, in particular those that have since formed France, England, Germany, and the Scandinavian states.

The Germans

This race, which came from Asia but had sojourned on the shores of the Baltic and the Black Sea, where Pytheas the Greek geographer of Marseilles met them,⁶ reveals an originality and a general similarity in its institutions.⁷ For an understanding of the ecclesiastical institutions of the Middle Ages, we must say a word about those Germanic institutions. Certain customs, which some writers would attribute to Christian tradition, are often a survival of some old Germanic usage.

The religion of the Germans, if we consider merely its substance, appears to be a great poem deifying the forces of nature. The German had neither temple nor idol, but he adored the Sun, Moon, Fire, Lightning, the Trees of the forest, and, higher than all these, an infinite Power, that soared above all others, and was called Wodan or Odin.⁸

The religion of a German was, however, not a mere poetic

⁵ We have no occasion at this point to speak of the Celtic race. Its influence was not less, in the formation of Europe and of Christendom, than that of the Germanic and Slavic races. But the Celts had for a long time been connected with the Roman world, they had long since been reached by the preaching of the Gospel. The ancient world and the Church already were acquainted with them. They were not a new people. For the same reason we have not introduced into our picture the peoples of Semitic race.

⁶ Lelewel, *Pythéas de Marseille et la géographie de son temps*.

⁷ The Germans belonged to the great Indo-European family. According to Tacitus, this name "brothers" (*Germani*) was given them when their first tribes crossed the Rhine in the second century before our era, by the inhabitants of Belgic Gaul. Tacitus, *Germ.*, chap. 2.

⁸ Tacitus calls him *regnator omnium deus*. *Op. cit.*, chap. 39.

fancy or simply a philosophical abstraction, as the religion of a Roman, according to the criticism of Euhemerus, might be at that period. It was a faith and a worship entering into his private life as also into his public life. The follower of Odin did not undertake anything of importance without first consulting his gods.⁹ The public assemblies of Germany were held in the sacred places. The priest of Odin had very extensive powers, not merely in matters of the liturgy and religious discipline, but also in questions of civil administration, police regulations, and criminal jurisdiction.¹⁰

A more profound difference is to be seen between the Roman and the German, if we consider their political and social institutions. As Chateaubriand says: "Independence was the whole basis of these barbarians, as the fatherland was the whole basis of a Roman."¹¹ Any political authority, outside that of the state, was forbidden by the law of Rome. For the German there was, we might say, no public authority. The free men of Germany were grouped into small cohesive communities that were, so to speak, concentric. They were formed by the family, nearness, common interest, or free choice. These confederations were real powers. They distributed escheats among their members; a sort of superior ownership by the collective group prevented an individual from disposing of his property without the consent of the confederation.¹² On the other hand, if one of them were wronged, all were obliged to rise up in his defense.¹³

These voluntary confederations did not absorb the rights of the individuals. The community was not a legal person; as such, it did not possess anything; it was instituted simply to

⁹ *Op. cit.*, chap. 10.

¹⁰ "Capital punishment, imprisonment, even a blow are permitted only to the priests." Tacitus, *Germ.*, chap. 7.

¹¹ Chateaubriand, *Études historiques*, Study VI, Part I.

¹² Tacitus, *op. cit.*, chap. 20.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, chap. 21.

guarantee the rights of the individual. If a dispute arose between Germans, the question was settled in the following manner. Each of the litigants swore that he had acted honorably, and he brought with him the greatest possible number of friends, who swore that his action was that of a man of honor. The assembly, weighing the number and value of these testimonies, would pass judgment. If the question could not be solved by this peaceful method, there would be individual combat.¹⁴ At an early date, however, pecuniary compromise or wergeld was allowed.¹⁵ Criminal charges were tried in much the same way. The primitive law—blood for blood—soon was replaced by “composition.”¹⁶

The confederation not only did not absorb the individual, but it did not destroy the unity of the nation. National questions were decided in plenary assemblies.¹⁷ These congresses decided upon peace and war, punished crimes regarded as public. Some of the groups had kings, always chosen by election, but generally selected from the same family. Other groups elected a king only when about to engage in war.

The army was modeled on the nation. Young men chose a leader, formed warrior bands,¹⁸ and placed themselves at the service of the emperors.¹⁹ But, in case of a national peril, all the free men fit to bear arms were summoned. They set out on the march, often accompanied by their families,²⁰ under the auspices of the god of the nation. Their courage was terrifying. They faced death with a smile. In time of battle their

¹⁴ Kurth, *Les origines de la civilisation moderne*, I, 85.

¹⁵ Or *wergeld* or *widrigeld*. Cf. Tacitus, *op. cit.*, chap. 12.

¹⁶ Part of this money went to the family of the injured person, part to the society.

¹⁷ “When they all think fit, they sit down armed. . . . If a proposal displease, the assembly reject it by an inarticulate murmur; if it prove agreeable, they clash their javelins.” Tacitus, *Germania*, chap. 11.

¹⁸ The warrior band is what Tacitus calls *comitatus*. *Ibid.*, chaps. 13–15. Cf. Caesar, *Gallie War*, VI, 15, 23.

¹⁹ Tacitus, *op. cit.*, chap. 15.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, chap. 7.

shouting was fearful. Says Tacitus: "A harsh, piercing note, and a broken roar, are the favorite tones; which they render more full and sonorous by applying their mouths to their shields."²¹ They encouraged each other by singing the war songs of the bards, saying, for example: "We have fought with the sword. Life's hours are passing. We will laugh when we have to die."²²

Inclined to drunkenness, with a passion for gambling, cruel to the point of sacrificing human victims to their divinities, the Germans in private life, however, possessed a purity of morals and nobility of feeling which the Romans could not help but admire. Says Salvian: "The race of the Goths is treacherous but chaste; the Alans unchaste but not treacherous; the Franks are deceitful but hospitable; the Saxons savage in their cruelty but admirable for their chastity."²³ What especially characterized the Germans everywhere and at all times, in peace as well as in war, was a daring and sometimes naïve initiative. Tacitus mentions several instances of this.

Two barbarian chieftains had proceeded to Rome, where, while they waited for access to Nero, who was engaged in other affairs, amongst the several sights which are usually shown to barbarians, they were conducted into Pompey's theater, that they might observe the immensity of the Roman people. Here, while they gazed round them—for indeed they took no delight in scenic representations which they understood not—asking about the mass of people seated in the pit, the distinction of orders, "which were the Roman knights, and where sat the senate," they spied certain persons in a foreign habit, sitting upon the benches of the senators, and asked who were these?

²¹ *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

²² *Pugnāvimus ensibus,
Vitae elapsae sunt horae:
Ridens moriar.*

The Scandinavian text of this war song has been published by Wormius in his *Littérature runique*, p. 197.

²³ Salvian, *De gubernatione Dei*, Bk. VII. Cf. Tacitus, *Germania*, chaps. 16, 17; Caesar, *Gallie War*, VI.

When they had learnt that this was a distinction conferred upon the ambassadors of such nations as signalized themselves by their merit and friendship toward the Romans; "There is not a nation upon earth," they exclaimed, "which surpasses the Germans in prowess and fidelity," and down they came and took their seats among the senators; a proceeding viewed indulgently by the spectators, as a specimen of ancient simplicity, and the effect of an honest emulation. Nero bestowed upon both the privileges of Roman citizens.²⁴

The Catholic Church, which in the first centuries so wonderfully assimilated the philosophical spirit of the Greek world and the organizing genius of the Roman people, would find, in her divine vitality, the means of incorporating, while purifying it, the robust initiative of this new race.

That native vigor existed unequally in the two groups of peoples that formed the Germanic race. The northern or Teutonic group included the Franks, the Angles, the Alamanni, the Saxons, etc., and the southern or Gothic group was made up of the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Burgundians, Suevi, Vandals, and, according to some historians, the Lombards. The former group, after a prolonged stay on the coasts of the North Sea and the Baltic, became more hardened to fatigue. The second group, on the contrary, was softened by contact with the Roman and Byzantine civilization.

Early Christianity among the Germans

From the Gothic tribes, that Arianism soon won, the Church had little to hope, although for a considerable time past the efforts of the missionaries had brought the Gospel to the regions occupied by the Teutonic race.

As early as the middle of the second century St. Justin spoke of the Christian faith of those barbarians who live in carts and sleep under tents or even under the simple shelter of the

²⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, Bk. XIII, chap. 54.

sky.²⁵ At the close of that century St. Irenaeus spoke explicitly of the Churches of Germany.²⁶ Tertullian, a little later, names the Germans among the peoples that have received the faith of Christ.²⁷ In the fourth century the acts of the councils of Arles and of Sardica, by their mention of the presence of the bishops of Trier, Cologne, Metz, Toul, and Chur, reveal the existence of many hierarchically established Christian communities in Germany.

About the same period, two providential events contributed to the spread of the Christian faith in those regions: the sojourn of the Roman armies beyond the Rhine, and the religious persecution by the emperors. Episodes like the instance of the Theban legion show that, at the end of the third century, the Roman armies quartered in Germany counted many Christians, and heroic Christians. A half-century later, exiles like St. Athanasius, who boasted of the friendships he had formed at Trier, brought to those same regions the example of their eminent virtues.

What was the history of those ancient Christian centers? A few epitaphs or inscriptions, some popular legends, and the great name of St. Maximinus of Trier, who was said to be the light of his time and the glory of Germany in the fourth century, but whose writings are entirely lost—that is all we have left of that period.

In the fifth century two equally destructive calamities afflicted those young valiant Christian communities of Germany: the barbarian invasion and the contagion of the Arian heresy.

The movement that turned the first ranks of the Germans southward was never completely halted. In the fifth century the push was formidable. It made the Roman frontiers yield

²⁵ *Dialogue with Trypho*, chap. 117.

²⁶ *Adv. haeres.*, I, 10.

²⁷ Tert., *Adversus judaeos*, chap. 7.

at three points. On the east, the Danube valley gave passage to the Goths who hurled themselves on Thrace and Asia Minor. On the west, the Rhine valley was open before the Franks, Alamanni, and Burgundians, who thronged into Gaul. In the middle section of the frontier, the Inn valley gave passage to the Heruli and Lombards, who occupied Italy. These brutal hordes of pagan barbarians trampled underfoot most of the young Christian communities of Germany.²⁸

At the same time another danger came to them from the Graeco-Roman world. Arianism, that diluted form of Christianity which the emperors and heretical bishops of the East had clothed with unparalleled splendor, was sure to seduce those peoples of Gothic race, more smitten than were their brethren by the brilliancy of the Graeco-Roman civilization. The personal influence of a man of genius, perverted by the heresy, aided this movement. The Gothic nobleman Ulfilas, who was taken to Constantinople as a hostage in the fourth century, there embraced the errors of Arius. Upon returning home, he spread the heresy through his preaching and through a Gothic translation of the Bible, impregnated with his doctrine. If we are to accept what the historians Theodoret and Sozomen say,²⁹ Ulfilas was commissioned to negotiate an alliance between the Arian Emperor Valens and the Visigoths, and rallied the latter to the standard of Arianism. From the Visigoths the error passed to the Ostrogoths, the Heruli, the Vandals, the Burgundians, the Gepidae, and the Rugians.³⁰

It would seem that the Church had vainly counted on these Germanic tribes that Paul Orosius and Salvian shortly before had greeted as a last hope, when the Roman Empire was seen to be falling. If discouragement did seize upon some souls, this

²⁸ We know how the intervention of many saints, such as St. Genevieve, St. Aignan, St. Lupus, preserved from this invasion several provinces of the region that would later form France.

²⁹ Theodoret, IV, 37; Sozomen, VI, 37.

³⁰ See Le Bachelet, art. "Arianisme" in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*.

feeling did not last long. The fifth century had not yet come to its close when the news spread that the leader of one of the bravest tribes of the Frankish people, Clovis, had received baptism at the hands of the bishop of Reims. At this news, one of the bishops who had most earnestly longed for that conversion, St. Avitus of Vienne, wrote: "The West now has its emperor sharing our faith. O king, may you bear this treasure of the faith, which you have in your heart, to the peoples who are settled beyond your frontiers." ³¹

³¹ St. Avitus, *Ep.*, 41.

CHAPTER V

The Church among the Franks

UPON the land that later would be France, three peoples were established at the close of the fifth century: the Franks, the Burgundians, and the Visigoths: the Franks in the northern portion, the Burgundians in the southeast, the Visigoths in the southwest. The Franks, of Teutonic race, had generally kept the national worship of Odin; the Burgundians and the Visigoths, of Gothic race, had, as a whole, embraced Arianism.¹

The Franks

The Franks, unlike the others, did not constitute a real ethnical group. The etymology of the word "frank" is difficult to ascertain. The word is met with as early as the third century. It is applied indiscriminately to all the peoples inhabiting the right bank of the Rhine, from the Main River to the sea. Beginning in the third century, we find these tribes in frequent relation with the Empire, either as slaves or as allied soldiers, even as consuls, such as Ricimer. In the reign of Valentinian II it was Arbogast, a Frank, who really directed the imperial government.

The Salic Law declares that the Franks bore "the hard yoke of the Romans." Among this people so very proud of its race, those frequent contacts with Roman civilization had only a

¹ Druidism, the religion of the Celts, was introduced into northern and central Gaul. Caesar, in his *Commentaries*, has much to say about the religion of the druids. It is not correct to say that the druids brought a new religion to Gaul. Rather they gave a new ritual and a theology to the existing religion. Maurice Bloch in Lavissee, *L'Hist. de France*, I, 55 ff.

superficial influence. It is true that the monarchical institution seemed to take a sudden and excessive increase among them: but the change appears to have taken place especially in the protocol formularies, in the title of *Dominus gloriosissimus, Excellentia*, and *Sublimitas*, which the notaries of the royal entourage took from the Roman language and the usages of the imperial court.² The national assemblies, called *campus, placitum*, or *conventus*, continued, at least to a large extent, the free traditions of old Germany. Another trait of the Frankish institutions was that strange régime of the statute or personal right, which made the application of the law dependent upon the place of birth. The right of the individual was paramount even though the good order of the state should suffer thereby.³

The Franks, who since the third century had been continually moving southward and westward, were divided into two groups: those living along the Rhine or Ripuarians, and those established near the mouth of the Rhine, near the Issel or Sala: these were the Salians.

The Salians as also the Ripuarians were divided into tribes and, in 476, at the time of the fall of the Empire, the chief of one of these tribes of the Salians was King Childeric. By his generous good will toward the Christian religion, he won the gratitude and confidence of the representatives of the Church.

After Childeric's premature death at Tournai in 481, the warriors chose his young son Clodowech or Clovis, fifteen years old.⁴ According to the law of the Salians, he had reached

² However, opinions are divided on this point. Cf. Fustel de Coulanges, *Institutions*, VI, 640; Moeller, *Hist. du Moyen Age*, pp. 330 f.

³ *In judicio interpellatus, sicut lex loci continet ubi natus fuit, respondeat. Lex ripuaria*, XXI, 3. *Quod si damnatus fuerit, secundum legem propriam, non secundum ripuariam, damnum sustineat. Lex. rip.*, XXXI, 4.

⁴ We shall call him simply Clovis. Says Fustel de Coulanges: "I beg to be allowed to write 'Clovis'; I might, like some others, write 'Clodowech,' and I would thus appear more learned; but we do not know how Clovis wrote his name, and still less do we know how he pronounced it. The accepted form has this in its favor, that

his majority three years before,⁵ had made his acquaintance with public life, and bore the spear since that time. The young ruler therefore already knew how to conciliate public esteem. By chance the letter written to him at that time by the Bishop of Reims, the metropolitan of Belgic Gaul, the great ecclesiastical personage of that country, has been preserved. The prelate wrote to him as follows:

A great rumor has reached us, to the effect that you have just taken in hand the administration of the second Belgium. . . . Be watchful that the good favor of God abandon you not. Be chaste and honorable. Show yourself deferential toward your bishops. If you are in agreement with them, your country will be well. Relieve the afflicted, protect the widows, feed the orphans, so act that everyone may love you and fear you. May the voice of justice be heard from your lips. . . . With what your father bequeathed to you, ransom the captives from the yoke of slavery. If you would reign, show yourself worthy to do so.⁶

St. Remigius

This letter contains a whole plan of Christian government. The Bishop who penned it was barely forty-two years old.⁷ His name was Remigius or Remi. He was born of a noble family in the district of Laon and was educated in the famous schools of the city of Reims. We are told by Sidonius Apollinaris and Gregory of Tours that Remigius soon excelled all his contemporaries by the maturity of his mind and the extent of his

everybody knows what personage I am speaking of." Achille Luchaire, *Leçon d'ouverture du cours d'hist. du Moyen Age*, 1890.

⁵ Pardessus, *Loi salique*, pp. 451 f.

⁶ *MGH, Epistolae merowingici et Karolini aevi*, I, 113; Kurth, *Clovis*, pp. 240 f.

⁷ This is the conclusion set forth in the *Histoire littéraire*, III, 156. On the basis of a letter of St. Remigius written in 512 and a testimony of St. Gregory of Tours, it places the birth of St. Remigius in 439.

learning.⁸ At the age of twenty-two he was elevated to the episcopal see of Reims.⁹ But this nobleman, this man of letters, this accomplished orator was not one of those who, like Sidonius, persistent in their grief over the decline of ancient Rome, could not tolerate the speech, the bearing, and the odor of the barbarian;¹⁰ like Salvian and Paul Orosius, Bishop Remigius was one of those who, "forgetting their nobility and literature and their old Rome, went to this barbarian, vulgar race that was arriving, that was going to hold the scepter of the world, that would hold in its hands the destinies of the Catholic Church."¹¹

The Catholic Church remained more prosperous in the country occupied by the Franks than in the other regions peopled by the Germanic race. The terrible invasions of the fifth century had been unable to destroy the Christian centers of northern Gaul, and Arianism had not crossed the Loire. The purest holiness was personified at that time in Paris in St. Genevieve. This venerable virgin, born in 423 near Nanterre, was about sixty years old when King Clovis succeeded his father. She survived the Frankish King by a few months. She was the saintly friend of the Bishop of Reims, the pious confidante of St. Clotilda, and the liberator of Paris. Although she did not, in any ostensible way, take part in the great events of the history we are about to relate, yet, in her prudent obscurity, Genevieve's influence should not be forgotten. Because of her beneficent influence over Queen Clotilda and King Clovis, no less than her heroic devotedness in the midst of the barbarian invasion, St. Genevieve of Paris should retain in history the

⁸ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.*, IX, 7; St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, p. 80.

⁹ This was an exception to the canons, which forbade the ordination of a bishop before the age of thirty years. *Hist. litt.*, III, 156.

¹⁰ Sidonius Apollinaris, XII, 13.

¹¹ Kurth, *Clovis*, pp. 302 f.

title "mother of Christian France" which popular veneration has given her.

Clotilda

Theodoric, the mighty king of the Ostrogoths, asked the King of the Franks for one of his sisters in marriage. Clovis, when he extended his conquests to the Loire in 492, also wished to be joined with a princess of royal blood. His choice turned to Clotilda, niece of Gondebad king of the Burgundians.

Clotilda was a Catholic. This marriage realized the longings of the episcopacy of Gaul, particularly of the bishop of Reims, St. Remigius, and the bishop of Vienne, St. Avitus. But to suppose this marriage was the work of the bishops' politics,¹² is a hypothesis unsupported by any document; and, if by politics, we mean a base intrigue, that is a calumny refuted by the character of the two great prelates.¹³ If any political considerations influenced the event, they were, on Clovis' part, the hope that through his marriage to a Catholic princess, he might attach his subjects of Roman origin more closely to himself, perhaps also the desire to make the Burgundians his allies against the Visigoths; on the side of Gondebad, it might have been the thought of obtaining a pledge of peace and security from the Franks and of counting on Clovis as a future ally in the event of conflict with his brother, against whom he had a grievance.¹⁴

It does not appear that either Clotilda or Remigius employed direct exhortations to urge Clovis to be converted. During four consecutive years the daily influence of the virtues of the young queen was added to the effect produced by the lofty

¹² Aug. Thierry, *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre*, I, 41-44; Henri Martin, *Histoire de France*, I, 430.

¹³ Gorini, *Défense de l'Église*, I, 291.

¹⁴ Kurth, *Sainte Clotilde*, pp. 30 f.

qualities of the Bishop of Reims.¹⁵ These influences finally conquered the soul of the barbarian King. One day during a great battle, seeing his soldiers giving way before an attack of the Alamanni, he invoked the "God of Clotilda" and promised to be baptized if he should be victorious.¹⁶ He was victorious and he kept his promise. The proud Sicambrian bowed his head, promised to adore what he had burned, and to burn what he had adored.¹⁷ On this occasion St. Avitus wrote to him, saying: "Your faith is a victory for all of us. . . . Your forebears prepared a great destiny for you: you have resolved to prepare even greater destinies for those coming after you. . . . The East will no longer be alone in having an emperor sharing our faith."¹⁸ "It was this Catholic baptism that made possible a fusion between Germans and Romans, that allied the

¹⁵ "Chroniclers say that it was Remigius who had the King restore to him a valuable vase stolen from his church. This is utterly unlikely." Kurth, *Sainte Clotilde*, p. 42.

¹⁶ Kurth, *Clovis*, pp. 312 ff. The tradition placing the famous battle at Tolbiac (Zulpich) near Cologne, goes back only to the sixteenth century.

¹⁷ St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, Bk. II, 28 (31). According to the custom of the time, immediately after the threefold immersion of his baptism, Clovis received the sacrament of confirmation. A ninth century legend, confusing the confirmation anointing with the royal anointing, here adds the account of the marvelous appearance of a dove carrying the ampulla of holy oil. This legend brought to the bishops of Reims the honor of consecrating all the kings of France. Kurth, *Clovis*, p. 848.

¹⁸ St. Avitus, *Ep.*, 41. Sometimes, besides this letter of St. Avitus, a letter of Pope Anastasius II is cited (e. g., in Lavissee and Rambaud, *Histoire générale*, I, 122, and Hergenröther, *Histoire de l'Église*, I, 626, note by the French translator). Julien Havet (*Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 1885, XLVI, 205 ff.) shows that this letter is apocryphal. It was fabricated by Jerome Vignier (d. 1661), the author of eight other false documents connected with the period of antiquity and the early Middle Ages, namely: an epitaph in verse of St. Perpetua, the acts of a conference held in the presence of Gondebad by the Catholic and Arian bishops of the kingdom in 499, a letter of Leontius bishop of Arles to St. Hilary in 462, a letter of St. Lupus of Troyes to St. Sidonius Apollinaris in 472, a letter of Pope St. Gelasius to St. Rusticus of Lyons in 494, a letter of Pope St. Symmachus to St. Avitus of Vienne in 501, the last will and testament of St. Perpetua, a deed of Clovis giving lands to two bishops. The anachronisms and juridical errors in this last document put Julien Havet on the track of the fraud.

Merovingian royalty to the episcopate, prepared for the alliance of the Carolingians with Rome . . . and led to the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire, the keystone of the whole Middle Ages.”¹⁹

Christianity in France

All the preparations were made; but everything was still to be done. Nothing resembled less the France of St. Louis or even the France of Charles the Bald, than the France of King Clovis. Neither the swift conquest of the kingdom of the Burgundians and that of the Visigoths²⁰ nor the transfer of the capital to Paris nor the numerous conversions of the Franks following that of the King, visibly altered the aspect of the nation. It was still a barbarous nation, that is, a permanent state of personal violence, of religious superstitions, and of social insecurity. Seemingly these disorders would disappear only by favor of solid political institutions. These latter, on the other hand, would become possible and acceptable only through a profound reform of the individuals. The necessity of this twofold simultaneous task of social progress was never more evident than after the conversion of the barbarians. To repress the brutal instincts and disruptive tendencies by con-

¹⁹ Lavissee and Rambaud, *Histoire générale*, I, 121.

²⁰ The same writers who accuse the episcopacy of Gaul with having, for political reasons, negotiated the marriage of Clovis with the daughter of the King of the Burgundians, look upon these first steps merely as the preliminaries of a more perfidious policy, the purpose of which was to bring under the sway of a Catholic king, Clovis, the Arian kingdoms of the Burgundians and the Visigoths. In consequence of this design, those bishops, particularly St. Avitus, are said to have favored the conquest of their country by the King of France. The character of the bishops of Gaul and especially that of St. Avitus protest against this charge. Says Kurth: "Anyone can see what a loss it would have been to the Archbishop of Vienne to pass under the yoke of the Franks, three-quarters of whom were still pagans. He was the friend of his sovereign and was seeing the Burgundians, won by the example of their royal prince, daily coming to the faith in growing numbers." *Clovis*, p. 368. Gorini (*Études pour la défense de l'Église*, I, 256-376) adduces texts in refutation of the assertions of Augustin Thierry on this subject.

tinued efforts carried on day after day, and to prevent their return by the establishment of good customs and wise institutions—such was the mission of the Church. After the work of conversion, that of Christian civilization was of the utmost importance.

The account of the murders that stained the last years of Clovis' life, and of the violent deeds that upset the reigns of his successors, as presented in St. Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks*, bears the marks of legends dramatized by popular imagination.²¹ However, it is not certain that the crimes attributed to Clovis, if they really occurred at all, were not previous to his baptism. In any event, the penalties decreed by the Salic law reveal a people that is violent and brutal, among whom attacks by roving bands upon persons and property are frequent, and harvests, animals, slaves, even free men are stolen. What is equally undeniable is the fact that whenever a barbarian, even though it be the king or queen, commits a crime of this sort, he may find himself face to face with the accusing figure of a representative of the Church. In the *Chronicon* of Fredegarius the following story is told:

One day it happened that St. Columban went to Brunehilde. The Queen, seeing him enter the courtyard, brought to him the children whom her grandson Thierry had by his irregular unions. The saint asked what they wanted. Brunehilde said to him: "These are the King's sons; give them the favor of your blessing." Columban replied: "Know that never will they bear the royal scepter, for they have issued forth from an evil place." She was angered and ordered the children to withdraw. Then she laid a trap for the saint.²²

The chronicler says further that King Thierry dared not molest the saint "for fear of provoking the anger of God by offending one of His servants."

Nor were the practices of superstition abolished by the con-

²¹ Kurth, *Hist. poét., des Mérov.*, pp. 295-317.

²² *Chronicle of Fredegarius*, chap. 31.

version of Clovis and of his Franks. Gregory of Tours relates that a certain anchorite used to pray and fast that the people in the region of Trier might decide to overturn a statue of Diana.²³ The early author of the life of St. Vedast relates that King Clotaire, invited to dinner by one of his vassals, perceived at one side the vessels of blessed beer for the Christians, and on the other side the vessels that were prepared for the pagan libations.²⁴ Sometimes, says the biographer of St. Amandus, it happened that a Christian community, impressed by some portent or a fearsome panic or a suggestion of the demon, suddenly quit the priest and the church and returned to their former superstitions.²⁵ Sorcery seems to have been frequently resorted to, and sorcerers were numerous, even among populations converted to Christianity. The Salic law punished with a fine of 100 sous anyone causing the death of a person by a drink made from magical herbs. Some Christians secretly wore amulets, offered sacrifice at the side of springs, met together in open places and there shouted terrible cries when an eclipse of the moon occurred. The Church patiently strove against these survivals of barbarism as she had done against the vestiges of Roman paganism. The worship of local saints, which she spread throughout the territory,²⁶ devotion to their holy relics, numerous pilgrimages to the tomb of St. Martin of Tours, the building of basilicas and chapels, such as the Basilica of St. Denis at Paris, built by order of Clovis and at the suggestion of St. Genevieve, the splendors of the liturgy displayed in the churches and prompting these barbarians to ask "whether this was not the heaven that had been promised them," such were the chief means by which bishops, priests, and monks little by little turned the faithful away from their supersti-

²³ St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, p. 339.

²⁴ *Vita S. Vedasti; Acta sanctorum*, February 6, p. 782.

²⁵ *Vita S. Amandi, op. cit.*, p. 815.

²⁶ St. Gregory of Tours, *De gloria martyrum* and *De gloria confessorum*.

tious practices. But we must by no means suppose that the Church, under these circumstances, forsook her primitive ideal or changed her traditional organization. She was considerate, as she always had been; she was resigned to see her children gradually, step by step, rise to the perfection of holiness. She pardoned a great deal in those who had done much to come to her. She often repeated these words addressed by St. Remigius to the detractors of Clovis: "Much must be pardoned in him who has become the propagator of the faith and the savior of the provinces." Who would dare say that the Church, by acting thus, repudiated the spirit of the Gospel? ²⁷

After Clovis' death a social unrest was added to the interior distress that troubled men's souls. In the disorders following the death of the great conqueror, divergent movements appeared among the populations he had brought under his sway. Over and above the petty rivalries of one group against another, two tendencies in particular became evident among these barbarians, some of whom were attracted by the splendor of the Roman civilization, and others jealously clung to their personal independence which they inherited from their German ancestors. And perhaps the terrible strife between Neustria and Austrasia, in which two women, Fredegonda and Brunehilde, played so infamous a part, was prolonged and embittered because it was an expression of all the hatreds imperceptibly stirred up by the two rival tendencies. As a remedy for these disintegrating tendencies, the Church applied her principle of spiritual unity. Says Guizot:

²⁷ Marignan (*Études sur la civilisation française*, I, 13, 249, and *passim*) charges the Church with having, at this period, given up its primitive ideal and its early organization. He says it became idolatrous and hierarchial. To this Kurth replies: "The Christian faith and the Christian Church remained what they had been in the catacombs, except, of course, what can be called the progress of growth. The pagan residue fermented a long time in the bottom. But it is not the comparative barbarism of the neophytes that one should appeal to in falsely claiming that the Church became barbarian like them." *Revue des questions historiques*, LXVIII (1900), 212.

This is a glorious and powerful fact. . . . The mere fact of the unity of the Church maintained some tie between countries and nations, some sentiments of a vast sympathy continued to be developed; and from the very heart of the most frightful confusion that the world has ever known, arose perhaps the most extensive and the purest idea that has ever rallied mankind, the idea of that spiritual society.²⁸

The idea of that spiritual society was such as to satisfy the two great tendencies dividing those men. By its organization, its laws, and its public worship, the Church gave them, in the way of majestic orderliness, everything the Roman civilization could offer; by its regard for the individual soul and by its doctrine concerning the independence of the Christian conscience, it safeguarded their legitimate concern for the rights of the human person.

Influence of Monasticism

So long as spiritual unity is not incorporated in a custom and established in an institution, it simply creates an unstable group, at the mercy of every threatening peril.

Nothing could be assured until the newly converted nation would be given, along with habits of manual and intellectual labor, a permanence of family and village groups on the soil. This task was undertaken by the monks.

They came from southern Gaul, from Italy, and from Ireland. The hard conditions imposed by the Roman fiscal legislation had rendered farming very difficult: the inroads of the barbarians completed its ruin. At the end of the fifth century, the forests, gradually encroaching upon the cleared land, finally here and there became united. Irish monks, trained under the strict Rule of St. Columban, came thither seeking, in a log-cabin, in a cave, in the shelter of the ruins of some Roman *castra*,²⁹ a secluded place for prayer. Probably these monks

²⁸ Guizot, *Histoire de la civilisation en France*, lesson 12.

²⁹ St. Columban first stopped in the Vosges at a place called Anagray, where there were ruins of a Roman *castrum*.

found, as St. Bernard did, that the forest sometimes speaks to the pious soul better than a book, that trees and rocks have speech more penetrating than the discourses of renowned orators.³⁰ A lost traveler or a wandering peasant would meet the hermit and, impressed by his holiness, would beg the favor of living under his guidance. The hermit would become a cenobite and abbot. Men, whole families, fearing attacks of brigands, would come and seek a bit of security near the little group. The monk becomes transformed into the head of a village. Under his direction humble dwellings arise, clearings are opened in the forest, rude plows cultivate the soil. Sometimes the village becomes a city. When, at the close of the seventh century, the excessively stern Rule of St. Columban had been replaced by the more adaptable Rule of St. Benedict, the monks increased in number and varied their labors; the village was encompassed by gardens. It has been reckoned that three-eighths of the cities and villages of France owe their existence to the monks.³¹ "It is by thousands," says Giry, "that place-names of religious origin are to be found on the map of France."³² Most of these places owe their names to the settlement of Benedictine monks there. St. Theodulph, after being a great nobleman, became a monk, farmer, and architect. After his death, a village founded by him kept his plow and hung it in the church as a relic.³³ Says Montalembert: "It seems to me that we should all contemplate with emotion, if it still existed, that monk's plow, doubly sacred by religion and by labor, by history and by virtue. For myself, I feel that I should kiss it as willingly as the sword of Charlemagne or the pen of Bossuet."³⁴

The biographies of the holy monks of that period abound in

³⁰ *Aliquid amplius invenies in sylvis quam in libris. Ligna ac lapides docebunt te quod a magistro audire non possis.* St. Bernard, *Ep.*, 106.

³¹ Martin, *Les moines et leur influence sociale*, I, 82.

³² Giry, *Manuel de diplomatique*, pp. 394 ff.

³³ *Acta sanctorum*, May 1, pp. 95 ff.

³⁴ Montalembert, *The Monks of the West*, II, 233.

marvelous accounts in which the desire to edify and interest may have added certain pious embellishments. But these stories show the prodigious influence exercised over the barbarian world by those heroes of virtue and faith.

St. Laumer

St. Laumer, at first a shepherd, then a student, came seeking "peace and freedom" in the forests of Le Perche. But the crude hut he built for himself attracted the attention of brigands who frequented those forests. His presence irked them. They decided to kill the hermit. When he saw them appear before his cabin, the saint, perhaps enlightened by God, surmised their design. He said to them: "My children, what have you come to do?" His voice was so calm and gentle, his bearing so noble, that the brigands in consternation hesitated. The saint smiled on them, and his smile, aided by divine grace, won those untutored souls, that a mere trifle would arouse and a mere nothing would soften. "May God have mercy on you," said the hermit. "Go in peace. Give up this banditry, that you may deserve God's pardon. I possess no treasure; for I have chosen Christ for my only inheritance." At these words, says the biographer, the brigands fell at the hermit's feet, begging his mercy.³⁵

St. Ebrulf

St. Ebrulf went deep into the forest of Ouche, now in the diocese of Bayeux. He was brought before the leader of a bandit band that occupied the district. Said the bandit chief to him: "Monk, what is it that brings you to this place? Do you not see that it is made for bandits, and not for hermits? To

³⁵ *Vita Launemari, Acta sanctorum*, January 19; Mabillon, *Acta sanctorum O.S.B.*, I, 335 ff.; *Histoire littéraire*, III, 411 f. St. Laumer died in 590, according to some writers; according to others, in 594.

exist here, one must live by theft and by the goods of others. We will not tolerate here those who purpose living by their own labor, and besides, the ground is too barren: it will be vain for you to cultivate it, it will yield nothing." To this the saint replied: "I have come here to bewail my sins. Under the protection of God, I do not fear the threats of any man or the roughness of any labor. The Lord can set a table in this wilderness for His servants, and you, too, if you will, may sit down at it with me."

To this the outlaw made no answer. The next day he came back with loaves of bread baked in ashes and a honeycomb, to join Ebrulf. He and his fellow-outlaws became the first monks of the new monastery, which has since become celebrated under the name of its holy founder.³⁶

St. Marculf

Montalembert, who quotes this incident from the biography of St. Ebrulf, also relates the following episode from the life of St. Marculf:

Marculf was of a rich and powerful race, established in the country of Bayeux, and the union of the proud independence of the Frank with the rigorous austerity of the monk is everywhere apparent in the narrative of his life. He had devoted the first half of his existence to preaching the faith to the inhabitants of Cotentin; from thence we see him set out, mounted on his ass, to meet King Chilbert on the day of a great festival, in the midst of his feudal lords, and asking of him a grant of land on which to build a monastery where the king and the commonwealth of the Franks might be prayed for. It was not the habitual adulation of the Romans of the Lower Empire which he used to gain the monarch's ear. "Mercy and peace to thee from Jesus Christ," he said, "illustrious prince; thou art seated on the throne of royal majesty, but thou shouldest not forget that thou art mortal,

³⁶ *Acta sanctorum O.S.B.*, I, 360. St. Ebrulf died in 596.

and that pride must not make thee despise thy fellow-creatures. . . . Be just even in thy clemency, and mix pity even with thy justice." Childebert granted his request.

But scarcely had he accomplished this first foundation, when, for the better enjoyment of the charms of solitude, Marculf took refuge in an island on the coast of Brittany, inhabited only by a handful of fishers. A numerous band of Saxon pirates having made a descent upon this island, the poor Bretons came trembling and kneeling to the Frank monk. "Be of good courage," he said to them; "if you trust my counsel, take your weapons, march against your enemy, and the God who overthrew Pharaoh will fight for you." They listened to him, put the Saxons to flight, and a second foundation marks the spot of that victory achieved over the piratical pagans by innocence and faith, inspired by the courage of a monk.³⁷

Not only against bandits, but against wild beasts the monks protected the people and even the domestic animals. St. Martin of Vertou, says the legend, forced a bear, who had devoured his horse, to take the horse's place and thus bring him to Rome.³⁸ St. Herveus, the patron saint of the popular singers of Brittany, required a wolf, that had eaten his dog, to take the latter's place, and the wild beast, suddenly tamed, from that time followed on leash the roving bard on all the highways of Armorica.³⁹ St. Laumer, seeing a hind being pursued by wolves, wept with pity and forced the wolves to abandon their victim.⁴⁰ The Bollandists are careful to warn us not to interpret legends like these too literally.⁴¹ Scholars have pointed out their real origin. Says Montalembert:

After the gradual disappearance of the Gallo-Roman population, the oxen, horses, and dogs had returned to a savage state, and it was in the forests that the British missionaries had to seek these animals to

³⁷ Montalembert, *Monks of the West*, II, 142. Cf. *Acta sanctorum*, May 1; *Acta sanctorum O.S.B.*, I, 128. St. Marculf died in 560. *Hist. littéraire*, III, 550.

³⁸ *Acta sanctorum O.S.B.*, I, 362.

³⁹ H. de la Villemarqué, *Légende celtique*, p. 264.

⁴⁰ *Acta sanctorum O.S.B.*, I, 319, 324.

⁴¹ Bollandists, *Comment. præv.*, no. 9.

employ them anew for domestic uses. The miracle consisted in restoring to man the empire and use of the creatures which God has given for instruments. This redomestication of animals which had relapsed into a savage condition is one of the most interesting episodes in the civilizing mission of the ancient cenobites.⁴²

While monks were clearing the ground, bishops of the Latin race ⁴³ were spreading a taste for letters. St. Avitus of Vienne composed a poem on the fall of our first parents; Guizot compares it with Milton's *Paradise Lost* and, in the case of some passages, considers the Gallo-Roman bishop superior to Milton. St. Fortunatus of Poitiers became a sort of official poet of the Merovingian kings. And St. Gregory of Tours, in his *History of the Franks*, gives us a vivid account of all Gaul in the sixth century, while popular songs, in an uncultured but spirited tongue, prefaced the national epics of France.

The Salic Law

It is in a Latin abounding with barbarisms and solecisms but replete with learned expressions and choice epithets, that Gregory of Tours and the poets sometimes wrote. In Latin, too, the Merovingian kings, who prided themselves on fine language, had their law drawn up. The law of the Salian Franks, the Salic law, is the oldest and most original of all those which have governed the peoples of Germany. It is the compilation, begun by Clovis, of a body of previously unwritten customs regulating private law. It seems to have received its final form under King Dagobert. The influence of Christianity did not greatly affect this legal monument, which the Franks regarded as something almost sacred. The Church merely had the traditional regulations applied, so far as possible, in a Christian spirit.

⁴² Montalembert, *Monks of the West*, II, 226.

⁴³ Many monks' names (Marculf, Ebrulf, Laumer, Herveus, Thierry) indicate Germanic or Celtic origin.

But many medieval customs are clarified by the reading of this first document of French national legislation. The whole symbolism of land rents, at times fantastical, appears in those graphic regulations for the gift of land or for freeing a person from the ties of kinship. Anybody wishing to make a donation of all or part of his possessions threw into the lap of the person to receive the donation a piece of a bush, a reed, a blade of grass, or any like object, while specifically naming the thing being given.⁴⁴ Whoever wished to withdraw from the rights and obligations of relationship came before the court with three alder switches, which he then broke upon his head and cast away in the four directions.⁴⁵

Another symbolism was taken from that "horrible poetry," spoken of by Livy in connection with the law of the Twelve Tables.⁴⁶ A murderer who was too poor to pay the required compensation, had a means of forcing his relatives to pay for him. He enters their house, piles up, in each corner, a little dirt or dust, as though requesting them to gather up their smallest savings; he squeezes the dust in his fist, then throws it over the shoulders of three of his relatives. Next he removes his shoes and nearly all his clothes, and climbs upon the hedge or whatever enclosure surrounds his relatives' house. If these kinsfolk do not pay his wergeld, he is put to death.⁴⁷ Apparently other provisions of the law show the Germanic origin of ordeals or judgments of God. A lawsuit might be settled by the ordeal of the caldron full of boiling water, that of hot iron or cold water or the crossed arms, or by private combat.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Title 48, Baluze, *Capitularia*, I, 313 f.; Pardessus, *La loi salique*, p. 309.

⁴⁵ Title 63, art. 1, Baluze, *op. cit.*, p. 321; Pardessus, p. 318.

⁴⁶ *Lex horrendi carminis*. Livy.

⁴⁷ Title 61, Baluze, *op. cit.*, pp. 320 f.; Pardessus, pp. 317 f.

⁴⁸ The Salic law mentions only one sort of ordeal, that of the caldron of boiling water (*aeneum*, Livy, LV). But, says Pardessus, "it would not be correct to conclude that no other ordeals were used" (Pardessus, *op. cit.*, p. 632). Cf. Du Cange, *Glossarium*. The use of private combat is attested among the Franks by chapter 28 of the *Capita extravagantia* and by St. Gregory of Tours (Pardessus, p. 634). Cf.

Lastly, the money compensation for various physical injuries, by the payment of six solidi, thirty, forty-five, etc., enables us to understand the similar tariffs in the penitential books.

The Salic law gives only indirect and vague indications as to the political organization and social institutions.⁴⁹ In this realm, the Church felt freer to act. The changing conditions in the life of the Frankish people required corresponding modifications in the laws and institutions. The kings themselves asked the Church to help them govern. "The founder of the Merovingian dynasty could not do without the Church for the governing of Roman Gaul. For the training of the Franks themselves and of the German people, his auxiliaries or his vanquished subjects, he was equally in need of the Church."⁵⁰ The Church answered the appeal. Under her influence, the character and rôle of royalty and of the national assemblies were altered, the condition of persons and property underwent important modifications.

Political Institutions

"The Church elevated and transformed the pagan concept of royalty. She obtained the acceptance of the idea of a divine institution. But she did not, for this reason, reject the popular idea of election; she could not have done so and had nothing to gain by doing so. Although the power comes from God, the divine choice may assume variable forms. It is as well adapted to pure democracy as to absolute and hereditary monarchy. In the latter, God manifests His will by bringing about the birth of an heir to the throne; in popular government or an oligarchy, He does so by insuring the electors."⁵¹ Says Hincmar

De Smedt, *Les origines du duel judiciaire. Congrès des sav. cath. Sc. hist.*, pp. 333 ff.

⁴⁹ No rule for the royal succession has been found in the Salic law.

⁵⁰ Flach, *Les origines de l'ancienne France*, III, 245. Cf. *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, IV, 439.

⁵¹ Flach, *op. cit.*, III, 237; *Revue d'hist. eccl.*, IV, 433. In the period previous to the invasion, was the kingship hereditary or elective? Wilhelm Sickel has tried to

of Reims: "Some are made rulers directly by God, as in the case of Moses; others are likewise chosen by Him, but indirectly through designation by men, as in the case of Josue; still others, by men themselves, but not without a divine approbation."⁵² Later on, coronation confirmed the sacred character of royalty, but did not create it.⁵³

Was the power of the Merovingian kings originally limited by assemblies? Long discussions on this subject seem to show that the first kings of the Merovingian race were not subject to any regular control by a national deliberative assembly. The texts advanced in opposition to this view⁵⁴ may be explained either by the occasional institution of advisory bodies, or by the mutiny of an army in revolt trying to impose its will upon the king.⁵⁵ It was the influence of the clergy that seems to have established, in the latter period of the Merovingian royalty, the regularity of national assemblies. The periodical meeting of national councils, where the bishops considered not only questions of dogma and ecclesiastical discipline, but also matters of education and public relief, gave the lay nobility the idea of holding meetings of their own. The bishops joined them. By their intellectual culture and the loftiness of their character, the bishops soon became the chief personages of these assemblies.⁵⁶ In case of abuse of royal power, the kings found that the bishops were the opponents they had to fear most. The lay nobles were mostly government officials remov-

prove that it was elective. Achille Luchaire inclines to the contrary opinion. Luchaire, *Institutions monarchiques de la France*, I, 61.

⁵² *Quidam a Deo in principatu constituuntur ut Moyses. . . . Quidam vero a Deo per hominem ut Josue. . . . Quidam autem per hominem, non sine nutu divino.* Hincmar, *De divortio Lotharii*, q. 6; *PL*, CXXV, 758.

⁵³ Lapôte, *L'Europe et le Saint-Siège*, pp. 233 f.

⁵⁴ For example, St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, p. 93.

⁵⁵ These are the conclusions reached by Fustel de Coulanges, III, 98, and Pfister, in Lavissee, *Hist. de France*, II, p. 174.

⁵⁶ Pfister in Lavissee, *Hist. de France*, II, 174.

able at the king's pleasure. A bishop was, in principle, irremovable.⁵⁷

Social Institutions

At the same time that the Church was moderating the royal power and imbuing the national assemblies with a Christian influence, she was also elevating and alleviating the condition of the people.

Among the Franks, as among the Romans, she found the institution of slavery. The word "slave" seems to come to us from that period, because many of those unfortunates belonged to the Slav race. The Church took pains to remind the slaves of their spiritual rights and duties, and to admonish the masters of their responsibility before God. In 517 the Council of Epaon decreed a two years' excommunication against anyone killing a slave who had not been condemned by a court, declared the marriage of slaves lawful, forbade the separation, through sale, of a husband from his wife or from his children.⁵⁸ The Church gladly received enfranchised slaves into her hierarchy. St. Gregory of Tours proudly relates the story of a slave of the Auvergne district, one Portianus, who fled to a monastery. His master, coming there to recover him, was stricken with blindness and gave up the slave. Partianus became a monk, then abbot; and King Thierry, when preparing to devastate Auvergne, on his way met Portianus, who reproved the King and made him go back.⁵⁹ The Church raised

⁵⁷ Cf. Moeller, *Histoire du Moyen Age*, p. 335.

⁵⁸ This city of Epaon has not been identified. But the council bearing this name was certainly held in the year 517. *Histoire littéraire*, III, 91-93. The Council of Epaon was not the only one that considered the question of slaves in France during the Merovingian period. We should add the following councils: Orleans (511), Reims (525), Orleans (fourth and fifth, 541 and 549), Paris (615), Reims (625), Chalons (647, 649), and Rouen (650). See the texts in Sirmond, *Conc. antiq. Galliae*, Vol. I.

⁵⁹ St. Gregory of Tours, *Vitae patrum*; PL, LXXI, 1026.

Portianus to her altars. The city of Saint-Pourçain in the Allier district preserves the memory of the former slave who, through the kindness of the Church, became the savior of the district.

The progressive amelioration in the condition of serfs and *coloni*,⁶⁰ the evolution of jurisprudence, which wiped out the legal inequality between a man of Salian origin and one of Roman origin,⁶¹ the transformation which replaced the old caste nobility of the Franks⁶² and the Gallo-Roman aristocracy by a new social hierarchy based on "recommenda- tion,"⁶³ into which bishops and abbots entered;⁶⁴ all these advances of a social progress, without being the exclusive work of the Church, were greatly aided by her and at that time probably would not have been possible without her. Moreover, the Church "supplied the state with its principal officials, had access to the council, to the court; there it held the first place and, in the great annual assemblies, exercised a preponderant influence."⁶⁵

St. Eligius and St. Leodegar

The Frankish Church was especially the Frankish episcopate. Two great men, two great saints, are particularly conspicuous among the bishops of the Merovingian epoch: St. Eligius bishop of Noyon and St. Leodegar bishop of Autun. Born in the neighborhood of Limoges, Eligius (or Eloi) was at first a member of the "palace school," which at that period

⁶⁰ Fustel de Coulanges, "Le colonat romain" in the *Recherches sur quelques problèmes d'histoire*.

⁶¹ Pfister, *op. cit.*, pp. 198 f. The Salic law evaluated the Salian franc at 200 sous, and the Roman franc at only 100 sous.

⁶² According to Roth, the old caste nobility disappeared after the invasions, or rather it was reduced to a single family, that of Merovius. Roth, *Geschichte des Beneficialwesens und Feudalität und Underthassen verband*.

⁶³ Waitz, *Ueber die Anfänge der Vassalität*.

⁶⁴ We should not conclude from this that thereby the Church became a sort of nationality vassal to the Frankish nationality. Says Flach: "Rather I think there was a religious Francia beside a lay Francia." *Origines de l'ancienne France*, III, 244.

⁶⁵ Flach, *op. cit.*, III, 245.

seems to have been merely the group of officers attached to the court.⁶⁶ He therefore belonged to that moving capital, that itinerant government which the royal court of the first dynasty really was. Besides working as a goldsmith, he negotiated, in the king's name, a peace treaty with the Breton King Judicael, founded monasteries, engaged in the work of the redemption of slaves, took an active part in the Council of Chalons, organized hospices for the poor and for pilgrims, went as a missionary to the Frisians and barbarian tribes of the seacoast. His influence was preponderant under Clotaire and Dagobert, and became still greater in the regency of St. Bathilde. The renown of his virtues and the miracles that followed his death soon set his name beside the names of St. Martin of Tours and St. Genevieve of Paris, among the names of the great popular saints of France.

More involved in political activities and more dramatic was the life of St. Leodegar; more spirited were the admiration and the enmity he aroused. The courage with which, as minister of Chilperic II, he reproached the king for his incestuous marriage, and the holy daring with which he opposed the policy of the cruel Ebroin, led to his imprisonment and death amid terrible suffering. The churches of France disputed with one another for the possession of the relics of "this martyr who died for his fellow-citizens,"⁶⁷ "this heavenly man whom the aging world could not endure,"⁶⁸ "this tutelary patron of the kingdom of France."⁶⁹ For a time his cult almost equaled that of St. Martin.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Vacandard, "La schola du palais mérovingien," in *Rev. des quest. historiques*; Prou, *Les monnaies mérovingiennes*; Paul Parsy, *Saint Eloi*, pp. 74 f.

⁶⁷ *Martyr . . . non tantum sibi sed et civibus*. S. Marc Taurin, homily 31.

⁶⁸ *Virilitatem viri coelestis senescens mundus non valuit sustinere*. Anon. oeduens, *Historiens de la Gaule*. II, 614.

⁶⁹ *Tanti sibi tutelarîs patrocinium demereri universum Galliarum regnum præcipua devotione adlaboravit*. *Menolog. Benedict.*, October 2.

⁷⁰ Kurth, "Glossaire toponymique de la commune de Saint-Léger" in the *Compte-rendus du congrès archéologique de Namur*, 1886, p. 302. Cf. Pitra, *Histoire de saint Léger*.

Upon a more restricted field of action we may point out two other bishops of Gaul, St. Ouen and St. Amandus. The former at Rouen and the latter at Bourges, Ghent, and Tournai, labored with unwearied zeal for the Christian civilization of France.

The Rural Clergy

Laboring under the direction of the bishops and at the side of the monks, the humble secular country clergy should not be forgotten. In the fourth century a most important event occurred in the history of the Church: the rural parish was born. It made its appearance in the Narbonne part of Gaul,⁷¹ and spread from there among the Burgundians and the Franks. Near a chapel erected to the memory of some saint, a priest took up his residence; with the offerings placed on the altar, a patrimony was constituted to the venerated saint.⁷² The people formed the habit of coming to the chapel to receive the sacraments, listen to the preaching, and attend the holy sacrifice. It became their meeting place. Thus the parish was founded. In the sixth century the bishops recognized the autonomy of this new organization. The priest serving the chapel, who at that time was called the "priest rector," "diocesan priest," "priest of the people,"⁷³ was nearly always, from that time on, designated at a public meeting by the archdeacon, with the approval of the inhabitants.⁷⁴ He himself belonged to the popular classes.

The chronicles of the time have little to say about him. The monastic annalists tell mostly of the labors of the monks. The activities of the bishops, who for the most part belonged to

⁷¹ Mansi, II, 275.

⁷² See the following councils: Orleans (511), Carpentras (527), and Orleans (538).

⁷³ *Presbyter regens ecclesiam, presbyter dioecesanus, presbyter plebius*. The word "curé" in Vacant's *Dict. de théologie*.

⁷⁴ Imbart de la Tour, *Questions d'histoire sociale et religieuse*, p. 271.

the great Gallo-Roman families and were more or less engaged in the public affairs of the nation, could not pass unobserved. But no one thought of transmitting to posterity the names of those village pastors who, in a hidden, uneventful ministry, were administering the sacraments, reforming popular morals by the rough discipline of penance, were prudently and wisely distributing the bread of the apostolic word and that of the Eucharist, while the monks, most of them simply tonsured, did not go beyond instructing the barbarians and offering the edification of their own virtues. These humble priests were also the originators of public liberties. It was in the "parish meetings," presided over by the pastor, that the people might become acquainted with the management of public funds and learned to discuss matters of general interest to the community. The village movement of the Middle Ages owed more to the Christian parish than to the Roman municipium. Unknown heroes, whose names are not found even in the list of the saints, as though humility must cover them in life and in death, these hard-working pastors of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, deserve the praise and homage which history has so often failed to give them.

The Popes and the Frankish Church

Above the work of monks, priests, and bishops, that of the papacy must not be forgotten. The period before the coming of St. Gregory the Great offers us indeed but little direct evidence of papal intervention in the discipline of the Church in France. But the paucity of documents concerning this period is well known. All the letters addressed to the Holy See by the Frankish episcopacy and the royalty have been lost.⁷⁵ And we cannot doubt but that a large number of papal letters of this

⁷⁵ St. Gregory's *registrum* mentions several of these letters. See V, 58; VI, 55; VIII, 4; XI, 10, 40, 44, 47, 49, 50; XIII, 7, 9.

period have been lost also. Furthermore, the publication, in the fifth and sixth centuries, of several codifications of canonical regulations rendered less frequent, for one or two centuries, the requests addressed to the Holy See for disciplinary intervention. A few instances cited by St. Gregory of Tours show sufficiently, nevertheless, in what relation of respectful dependence the Frankish episcopacy was toward the Holy See.⁷⁶ Similar considerations ought to be made on the Merovingian period that followed the death of St. Gregory the Great. After Gregory of Tours we no longer find any history written from even a slightly general point of view. Some chroniclers and a few hagiographers with a view limited to the province or the monastery where they wrote: these are the only sources from which we can obtain information.⁷⁷ Moreover, the seventh century was marked by a powerful influence of the Benedictine monks upon society, and we know the close ties that always bound the Benedictine Order to the Holy See.

But St. Gregory the Great's correspondence, in spite of its big gaps, abundantly shows how effective the influence of the papacy was upon the Frankish Church. "St. Gregory exercised the powers that had strengthened the authority of the Apostolic See in the fifth century and had been made more precise at the beginning of the sixth century in southern Gaul."⁷⁸ He was vigilant in the matter of the strict observance of ecclesiastical laws;⁷⁹ he called to mind, in a letter to the Frankish bishops, the laws about episcopal nominations, about women and clerics living together, and about the holding of

⁷⁶ *MGH*, II, 1; V, 20; X, 1.

⁷⁷ Molinier, *Les sources de l'histoire de France*, V, viii-xx; Pitra, *Histoire de saint Léger*, pp. vi f.

⁷⁸ Vaes, "La papauté et l'église franque," in *Rev. d'hist. eccl.*, VI, 782. We have merely summarized two scholarly articles by Vaes in the *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* (Louvain), 1905.

⁷⁹ It is generally admitted that in the fifth century the pope exercised a supreme legislative and judiciary authority in Gaul. Loening, *Geschichte des deutschen Kirchenrechts*, II, 62.

provincial councils.⁸⁰ He judged and censured the conduct of several members of the episcopacy.⁸¹

St. Gregory's paternal solicitude did more than contribute to making the Frankish nation a Christian nation, it also succeeded in making it an apostolic nation. When, in 596, he sent the monk Augustine to carry the faith to England, St. Gregory recommended him to the bishops of Aix, Lyons, Autun, and Tours, and asked for him the protection of the Frankish princes.⁸² It was in Gaul that Augustine received episcopal consecration; it was with the help of Frankish priests that he faced the barbarian tribes of England, whose incomprehensible language dismayed him. And St. Gregory could write later to Queen Brunehilde and to her grandson that the triumph of the faith in England was due mostly to assistance given by the Franks.⁸³ This was the beginning of the fulfilment of St. Avitus' wish that he expressed in a letter to King Clovis. "May you be able," he said, "to carry this treasure of the faith, that you have in your heart, to those peoples that are settled beyond your frontiers."

⁸⁰ *MGH, Reg.*, IX, 218.

⁸¹ He passed judgment on the conduct of Mena of Toulon, Virgilius of Arles, Soacre of Autun, Theodore of Marseilles, Serenus of Marseilles, Desiderius of Vienne, and others. Cf. *MGH, Reg.*, I, 45; VI, 51; IX, 208, 223 f.; XI, 34, 38; XIII, 7. See also VIII, 4; IX 213, 215, 218; XI, 10, 46.

⁸² *MGH, Reg.*, VI, 49, 57; Jaffé, I, 1432, 1433.

⁸³ *MGH, Reg.*, XI, 48. On the civilizing influence of the Frankish Church, see especially Vacandard, *Vie de saint Ouen*; Jaud, *Vie de saint Filibert*; Allard, "L'esclavage au lendemain des invasions" in *Revue des quest. hist.*, April 1, 1911; De la Borderie, *Histoire de Bretagne*, Vol. I.

CHAPTER VI

The Church among the Anglo-Saxons

THE island of Great Britain, in the sixth century, was inhabited by two rival races: the Britons, belonging to the Celtic family, and the Anglo-Saxons, sprung from the German family. The Britons were the primitive inhabitants of the island.¹ At an early date they had been converted to the Christian faith. They were proud of their apostle St. Patrick and their martyr St. Alban, proud of the part taken by their bishops at the councils of Arles and of Sardica, proud also of their race, which they thought unconquerable.² A great heresy originated in their midst.³ The Briton Pelagius had disturbed the West and the East, exalting the power of the natural virtues and lessening the part of divine grace; perhaps some of them were proud of this also.

But the Britons were now, in England, merely a handful of mountaineers who had sought refuge in Wales. During the second half of the fifth century three warlike tribes—Saxons, Angles, and Jutes⁴—had driven the Britons before them with

¹ Caesar, *Commentaries*, V, 12.

² Says Tacitus: "The Britons cheerfully submit to levies, tributes, and the other services of government . . . but such treatment they bear with impatience, their subjection only extending to obedience, not to servitude, if they are not treated injuriously." *Life of Agricola*, chap. 13.

³ Some scholars suppose that Pelagius composed his system at Rome. Cabrol, *L'Angleterre chrétienne*, p. 32.

⁴ A large party of Jutes settled on the peninsula since called Jutland. Four Saxon chiefs founded four kingdoms, namely, Kent, Sussex, Wessex, and Essex. The Angles founded three kingdoms: Northumbria, East Anglia, and Mercia or West Anglia. The seven kingdoms constituted what has been called the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy. It embraced what is now England (except Wales) and the southern part of Scotland.

great violence. One of the witnesses of this disaster, the monk Gildas, in his strange style, says: "The fire of vengeance, justly kindled by former crimes, spread from sea to sea, fed by the hands of our foes, in the east; and did not cease until, destroying the neighboring towns and lands, it reached the other side of the island and dipped its red and savage tongue in the western ocean."⁵ "The priests were slain," says Venerable Bede; "the bishops with their flock were cut off by sword as well as by fire without respect to their dignity, nor was there any that would give burial to them that had been cruelly slain."⁶ Theonus bishop of London and Tadioc bishop of York reached the mountains of Wales with the remnants of their Christian communities. A large number, crowding into their boats of animal hides, with their priests and their minstrels, came to Amorica,⁷ and even to Spain. Of the numerous monuments of the Christian faith erected by the old Britons on the soil of their country, scarcely one remained except the little church, later dedicated to St. Martin, which Christian piety still venerates at Canterbury.

St. Augustine of Canterbury

The new race brought to England the customs of the peoples of Germany, their political organization and their mythology, with certain traits that were particularly fierce and brutal, but also remarkably sturdy. These tall, blue-eyed men,⁸ were proud of repeating verses of their poets, "celebrating battle-fields where blood flowed, and the meals at which they ate the hearts of their foes, and the cursed places where the black

⁵ Gildas, *De excidio Britanniae*, chap. 24; *PL*, LXIX, 345; Petrie, *Monumenta historica britannica*, p. 14.

⁶ Bede, *History of the Church of England*, Bk. I, chap. 15; *PL*, XCV, 44.

⁷ This was a blessing for Brittany, which has reverently preserved the cult of the holy bishops who brought it the faith: St. Brieuc, St. Pol, St. Corentinus, and St. Machutus (Malo).

⁸ *Coerulei oculi, magna corpora*, says Tacitus, *De mor. Germ.*, chap. 4.

waves reached up to the clouds," but they also liked the poems in which the solemn thought of death contained nothing dreadful; and when they sang of love it was of a deep and faithful love that would easily become knightly love.⁹

This is why their appearance, ferocious in the heat of battle, when in repose awakened feelings of liking. St. Gregory, seeing some young Anglo-Saxons in the Roman Forum, lamented the fact that "the grace of God did not dwell within those beautiful brows." Being unable himself to carry the faith to them, he selected forty monks from St. Andrew's monastery to bring those people the light of the Gospel. These monks were all of humble origin. They were "monks fearing the Lord," says Venerable Bede. We have no details as to the origin and vocation of him who, after being prior of St. Andrew's, became the head of this mission to England. His name was Augustine. From St. Gregory's letters we know that the little band, when crossing through Gaul, where the Pope recommended them to several holy bishops, suddenly became disheartened. Terrifying rumors were current among the people around them, regarding those awful conquerors of Britain, whom the historian Procopius speaks of as being half fantastic and very wicked. The good monks, accustomed to the tranquil life of their monastery, were disturbed. Augustine, their leader, had to go back to Rome for further instructions. He returned with the following letter, and the missionaries were strengthened by its calm, confident energy. Says the Pope:

You must needs, my beloved sons, now fulfil the good work which by the help of God you have taken in hand. Let therefore neither the travail of the journey nor the talk of evil-tongued men dismay you. Be you in all points humbly obedient to Augustine your provost, that now returneth to you. . . . The Almighty God grant that . . . though I cannot myself labor with you, I may be found to enjoy part

⁹ See several of these songs in Augustin Thierry, *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands*, I, 131.

of your reward along with you, for that surely I have a will to labor. God keep you in safety, my dear beloved children.¹⁰

Augustine was the bearer of other letters from St. Gregory. One was addressed to Queen Brunehilde, then at the height of her power. The Pope, in deferential terms,¹¹ recommended his forty missionaries to the sovereign protection of the Queen of Austrasia. The whole winter of 596 was used in crossing Gaul. In the spring of 597 a boat, carrying Augustine, his monks, and some Frankish priests who were to serve as interpreters, entered the mouth of the Thames River and landed on the island of Thanet. A letter was at once sent to Ethelbert, king of Kent, telling him that the messengers from Rome had come, bringing to him and his people the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.

Augustine, informed in Gaul, knew the history of this young Anglo-Saxon King, spirited and proud, ambitious and upright, who seven years before had sought a marriage among the Catholic princesses at the court of the kings of France. A great-granddaughter of St. Clotilda, worthy descendant of Bertha the wife of Clovis, and only daughter (an orphan) of Charibert I (king of Paris) and the unfortunate Queen Ingoberga, had consented to unite her destiny with that of the pagan monarch. She brought to England with her, as chaplain, the pious bishop of Senlis, Luidhard. In the little Canterbury chapel, last remains of the Briton Church, which the

¹⁰ *MGH, Reg. Gregor.*, VI, 15; *PL*, LXXVII, 836; Bede, *History of the Church of England*, Bk. I, chap. 23.

¹¹ The general tone of St. Gregory's correspondence with Queen Brunehilde has astonished many historians. They ask how a pope could shower praises upon the terrible and bloody Queen of Austrasia. But a better informed criticism has rehabilitated, if not Brunehilde's political régime, which was that of royal absolutism, at least her character, which was noble, and her private life, which was blameless. See Kurth, "Brunehaut" in *Revue des questions historiques*, I (1891), 5 ff., and Pfister in Lavis, *Histoire de France*, II, 148 f. Moreover, St. Gregory's letter was written before the period in which took place the crimes for which the Queen of Austrasia is blamed.

King placed at her disposal and which she dedicated to St. Martin the patron saint of her own country, Queen Bertha had the consolation of worshipping according to the religion of France.

The King, who probably had been disposed in favor of Christianity by his conversations with the Queen and Bishop Luidhard, judged all these religious questions with his barbarian prejudices. He agreed to a conference with the Roman messengers; but it must be held in the open air, he said, lest he be the victim of some evil influence which the strangers might cast upon him.¹² The Venerable Bede gives this account of the meeting. "On the appointed day, the King came to the island of Thanet and sat down, surrounded by his warriors." Probably, according to custom, "they came each one armed with spear or sword, wearing a helmet of boar's head, a coat of mail, and a wooden shield with iron bosses."¹³ The ancient historian of England continues his account thus:

The monks came not armed with the force of the devil but with the strength of God, carrying before them in place of a banner a cross of silver and the image of the Lord Savior painted in a table, and singing the litanies, prayed the Lord both for their own eternal salvation and that of them as well to whom and for whose sake they had come thither.¹⁴ And when they sitting down, as the King did bid them, preached unto him the word of life and also to all his household there present, he answered them, saying: "The words and promises you give us are fair; but yet, for that they are strange and uncertain, I cannot rashly assent unto them, forsaking those things which this long time I have observed with all the people of the English. But for so much as you are come hither so far and, as I seem to have dis-

¹² Bede, *op. cit.*, Bk. I, chap. 25.

¹³ Brou, *Saint Augustin*, p. 54.

¹⁴ "In the history of the Church there is nothing more beautiful than the entry of the holy monk Augustine into the Kingdom of Kent with his forty companions who, preceded by the cross and the image of the great King our Lord Jesus Christ, made solemn vows for the conversion of England." Bossuet, *L'Histoire universelle*, Part I, eleventh epoch.

cerned, have longing to impart to us also such knowledge as you took to be right good and true, we will not seek your trouble." He allowed them therefore a lodging in the city of Durovernum (Canterbury) . . . and did not withhold the licence of preaching.¹⁵

This scene, described by Venerable Bede, is characteristic. It reveals, even at that early date, the prudent calculation and wise breadth of view that would later be manifested in the genius of the great English nation. In the uproar of a battle-field the first Christian king of France, Clovis, decides his future and that of his people with a spontaneous and enthusiastic act; the Anglo-Saxon king, seated on his grassy knoll, has the appearance of promulgating, after calm deliberation, a charter of civil and religious liberty.¹⁶

Conversion of Ethelbert

Bertha's gentle influence and Luidhard's learned explanations accomplished, in the soul of the King and his warriors, what Augustine's discourse had begun. In the year 597, on Pentecost, 101 years after the baptism of the King of the Franks, the King of Kent was baptized in the old Church of St. Martin at Canterbury.¹⁷ On Christmas Day of that same year, ten thousand of his subjects followed his example.¹⁸ At the cradle of Christian England as at that of Christian France, a pious wife had prepared the way for the minister of the Church. This scene would be repeated more than once in the history of the conversion of barbarous nations "as if," says an old his-

¹⁵ Bede, Bk. I, chap. 25; *PL*, XCV, 55 f.

¹⁶ Lord Granville had a monument placed at the spot where tradition assigns this meeting.

¹⁷ In St. Martin's Church is the baptismal font which, according to a respectable tradition, was used at the baptism of King Ethelbert.

¹⁸ Meanwhile Augustine went to Arles to be consecrated. Since Rome was too remote, St. Gregory indicated the city of Arles, "from which the faith radiated throughout Gaul" and which would be a sort of second Rome. *Reg. Greg.*, VI, 53.

torian, "Providence wished to place woman at the side of every cradle."

St. Gregory the Great, who was then revising his *Book of Morals*, was impelled to insert this expression of his joy:

Lo! the tongue of Britain, which knew only how to grate barbarian sounds, has begun long since to resound in the divine praises the Hebrew Alleluia. Behold the ocean, which before was swelling, is now calmed beneath, and subject to, the feet of the saints; and its barbarous motions, which the princes of the earth had been unable to control with the sword, do the mouths of priests bind with simple words through fear of God.¹⁹

The Pope wrote to Queen Bertha that she was the Helena of the new Constantine. The new Constantine, like the other, abandoned his city and his palace to Augustine, and withdrew to the northern coast, to Reculver. This was his "donation." Says Duchesne: "It may be that Ethelbert acted thus under the influence of the account given him of the story of Constantine the Great. His wooden palace was his Lateran, Augustine his Sylvester, and Reculver his Byzantium."²⁰ Canterbury became a little Rome. Its abbey was exempted from taxation, it received the *Infangentheof*, or the right to try robbers apprehended *flagrante delicto*, and the privilege of coining money. Its civil jurisdiction extended to certain quarters of the city and over more than ten rural parishes. Thus, under the influence of the same causes, ecclesiastical feudalism sprang up on the soil of England as on that of France and of Italy. Shortly afterward the Pope sent Augustine the pallium, which made him primate of England, with the mission of organizing the hierarchy in the kingdom.²¹

¹⁹ *Morals*, Bk. XXVII, chap. 21.

²⁰ Duchesne, *Églises séparées*, p. 5.

²¹ *MGH, Reg. Gregor.*, XI, 65. On the pallium, see Cabrol, *L'Angleterre chrétienne*, pp. 317-319.

The Britons and the Anglo-Saxons

In their joy at the conversion of the great Anglo-Saxon nation, did Augustine and Gregory entertain any illusions about the difficulties which the civilizing of that people would encounter? The Pope's letter, prematurely authorizing Augustine to organize the hierarchy throughout the realm, would lead us to think so. Those instructions could not be carried out. As was natural in a Roman missionary, Augustine's attitude also showed lack of acquaintance with the dispositions of the Anglo-Saxon people. Little by little the Archbishop of Canterbury, profiting by the lessons of experience and the advice of the Pope, applied to the work of civilizing England that prudence and discretion, prompted by the purest charity, which would assure its complete success.

Despite the unity of faith henceforth acquired, a repressed antipathy continued between the vanquished race of Britons and the victorious race of Anglo-Saxons. St. Augustine's first blunder was to disregard that opposition. To bring about the conversion of the Angles, he appealed to the priests of that Welch Church which, having withdrawn to its rugged mountains, could not forget the memory of the cruel invasions. If we are to judge from Venerable Bede's way of speaking, it seems that Augustine did not sufficiently consider the somewhat proud and susceptible character of the rough Welch mountaineers. A conference held on the banks of the Severn River, between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the delegates of the Welch Church, failed to produce any result. The Britons maintained a distrustful silence. Another conference was agreed upon. Did the Britons see in the imposing attitude of the Roman prelate, who was head and shoulders taller than they were, a sign of pride? ²² The fact is that they would not attend

²² *Beati Augustini formam et personam patriciam, staturam proceram et arduam adeo ut a scapulis populo superemineret. Vita sancti Augustini monachi, auctore Gocelino monacho*, chap. 45.

a second conference without seeking the advice "of a certain holy and wise man who used to live amongst them an anchorite's life." They asked him whether they ought to listen to the Roman envoy.

He replied: "If he be a man of God, follow him." "And how can we prove this?" said they. The anchorite answered: "If this Augustine be meek and lowly of heart." They said again: "And how have we power to discern this?" "Marry," quoth he, "if, when ye approach near, he ariseth courteously to you, hear him obediently; but if he despise you nor will vouchsafe to rise at your presence, let him likewise be despised by you."

But when the appointed day arrived, seven Briton bishops, accompanied by several monks from the Bangor monastery, came to the place. Augustine had arrived ahead of them. Either through inadvertance or because he was unaware there were bishops among the Briton delegates, he did not at once stand up. "The seven bishops," says Bede, "and a greater number of monks, straightways waxing wroth, they noted him of pride and endeavored to gainsay all that he said." Augustine's proposals did but increase the spirit of disunion. That old Church in England, so separated from the continent, had permitted the introduction into the liturgy of particular practices, notably with regard to the celebration of Easter and the administration of baptism. Augustine asked them, not only to help him in preaching Christianity to the Anglo-Saxons, but also to conform to the Roman rite in administering baptism and to celebrate Easter on the same date as the Catholics of other countries. To each of the requests from him whom they called "the bishop of the English," that is, the bishop of their oppressors, the proud Britons replied with a firm refusal. They even said, according to Bede, that they did not recognize Augustine as having any authority over their Churches.²³ Thereupon August-

²³ *Neque se illum pro archiepiscopo habituros*. Bede, Bk. II, chap. 2; *PL*, XCV, 83.

tine stood up and addressed them as follows: "Know that, if you are unwilling to assist me in showing the Saxons the way of salvation, these Saxons, by a just chastisement of God, will be ministers of death unto you." Eight years later a pagan king of Northumbria invaded Wales with an army and slew more than eight hundred of those monks of Bangor, who had been the heart and soul of the opposition to Augustine's authority.²⁴

We have related this incident at length because Protestants often consider those old Britons their forebears. Augustine, for these Protestants, is the Church of Rome, stern, tyrannical, and intruding; the little Welch Church stands for the Christian conscience rebelling against the encroachment of the Roman Church. Catholics, on the other hand, have at times too much attenuated, almost effaced, the import of this unfortunate incident. Impartial history, it seems to us, belies both of these extreme views. Bede's account, if we add what we know from other sources of the life of St. Augustine, does not leave any room to doubt the missionary's evangelical spirit. Furthermore, there has been nothing discovered by historical research concerning the origins of the Welch Church, showing us therein an organization essentially different from the Church of Rome. There is no basis for attributing Presbyterian doctrines to the Welch Church.²⁵ The rigid stubbornness of that Welch race, an opposition that erected an impassable barrier between the souls of the conquered Britons and those of the conquering Saxons,²⁶ a real alteration of the faith of that people through the influence of local superstitions, some remnant perhaps of the Pelagian heresy among these untutored Britons,²⁷ and on St. Augustine's

²⁴ Cf. Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, chap. 2; Thierry, *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre*, I, 82 ff.

²⁵ Kraus, *Kirchengeschichte*, sec. 64, nos. 3 and 4.

²⁶ Bede, I, 22; II, 20.

²⁷ Bede relates how, a few years before the invasion of the Angles, "the Pelagian heresy (being brought in by Agricola, the son of Severian, a Pelagian bishop), had stained the faith of the provinces of Britain with that vile pestilence. But the Britons were unable by controversy to refute their wily and wicked persuasions; they devised

part an unfortunate misunderstanding or a fatal oversight of those popular tendencies which he failed to be considerate of and consequently certain imprudent steps and untimely demands: all this suffices to explain the thwarting of the attempt by the holy apostle of England. St. Augustine was in continual correspondence with Pope St. Gregory. The great Pontiff's consummate prudence came to the help of the inexperience of the missionary. The latter would need that assistance for the work of Christian civilization that was still to be accomplished in the Anglo-Saxon nation itself.

The Anglo-Saxons

The morals and customs of the Anglo-Saxons were not transformed at once after their conversion. The long, violent conflicts between the Celts and the Saxons had exasperated the barbaric instincts of them both. In the eighth century, of fifteen kings of Northumbria, thirteen died a violent death. The laws of Ethelbert, drawn up about the year 600, were made for a people among whom attacks upon the person are the most frequent crimes. The Penitential Book of St. Theodore which gives, at the end of the seventh century, a list of penances assigned for each sin, indicates practices of revolting immorality.²⁸ Drunkenness, that passion of misty countries and idle races, sometimes carried those brutal instincts to the point of a fit of madness. The slave-trade continued openly, disappearing only in the eleventh century, through the heroic efforts of Wulfstan bishop of Worcester.

this wholesome counsel, to seek for aid of the bishops of Gaul in their spiritual warfare." Bk. I, chap. 17. St. Germain of Auxerre and St. Lupus of Troyes answered this appeal. It was on their way to Britain that they met St. Genevieve at Nanterre.

²⁸ *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, pp 314, 317, 318; *PL*, XCIX, 968-972. According to Paul Fournier, the use of the penitentials, that is, the list of penances tabulated for each sin, arose in the Celtic Church and from there passed to the Anglo-Saxon Church. *Revue d'H. et de L. rel.*, IX, 102. Cf. Wasserschleben, *Die Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche*.

Christian faith itself seemed to disappear for a time. Ethelbert's son and successor, Eadbald, cruel and dissolute, revived the pagan religion. Numerous defections occurred. An altar of Odin was erected at Canterbury.²⁹ Devout Christians had liturgical customs very different from those of Rome. From the Churches of Wales they had taken the practice of litanies, processions, numerous lections, and a very complicated liturgy of the mass. But the opposition of the two races to each other continued: and after two centuries of contact it remained almost as insoluble as at their first meeting.³⁰ The Britons would put no trust in the Anglo-Saxons, and the latter regarded the Briton Church as schismatic.

St. Gregory, when consulted in the matter, was of opinion that the greatest condescension and gentlest kindness should be employed toward that people. He recalled the maxim he had written in his *Books of Morals*: "Love stimulates inactive souls to work."³¹ He wrote to Augustine, saying: "I wish that, from all the usages of Rome, of Gaul, or of any other Churches, you choose what seems to you most befitting the Almighty. Take what is devout, religious, and sound, and therewith make as it were a bouquet that may be the custom of the English."³² At first the Pope had counseled King Ethelbert to demolish the temples. Shortly afterward he wrote as follows: "After re-

²⁹ Bede, Bk. II, chap. 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, chap. 20. Abbot Beino, so celebrated in legend, when he heard the voice of an Angle outside the monastery walls, said to his Briton monks: "Take up your frocks and your shoes, and quick, let us depart; this man's nation speaks a language abominable to me: they come to invade us, and take away our goods forever." Montalembert, *Monks of the West*, II, 419 (Bk. VIII).

³¹ *Machina quippe mentis est vis amoris. Morals*, VI, 37.

³² *MGH, Reg. Greg.*, XI, 56. This long letter is known as the *Responsiones Gregorii*. Duchesne regards it as spurious (*Christian Worship*, p. 99 note). Its authenticity is admitted by Hartmann (*MGH, Reg. Greg.*, II, 331) and by Jaffé (*Regesta pontif.*, I, 699). The view of Mommsen and Grisar is that it is comparatively authentic. If this be true, it is a collection of excerpts from letters or a revision made afterwards, based on instructions given orally by the Pope (*Civiltà cattolica*, 1892, II, 46). For our present purpose, this discussion is of little importance. Nobody denies that these instructions show the practice followed by St. Augustine.

flection, I have decided that it was not suitable to destroy the temples. Sprinkle them with holy water and put altars in them. The nation will be mollified at seeing that we leave the shrines standing and will the more readily come to the places which they formerly frequented.”³³ “The English offer sacrifices of bulls to the demons. The custom should be turned into some Christian festival.”³⁴ St. Gregory went farther; he advised that banquets be combined with the religious festivals.³⁵ Experience showed that in this the condescension was excessive: abuses, provoked by the national vice, led the Council of Clovesho in 747 to suppress these semi-liturgical repasts.

But the spirit of St. Gregory continued to preside over the civilizing work of the Catholic missionaries. “The Church,” says Godefroid Kurth, “treated the soul of the barbarians as a wild sapling full of sap and vigor, on which it merely grafted the elements of a purer life, leaving to time and toil the completion of the work. The succeeding ages have confirmed the wisdom of that policy.”³⁶ “Provided there be unity of faith,” said St. Gregory, “the customs are of no moment.”³⁷ And he was at great pains to acquaint himself with those customs. He wrote: “He is very stupid who places his primacy in being unwilling to inform himself on what best can be done.”³⁸ In this same spirit St. Augustine, when consulted by King Ethelbert as to the reform of the country’s laws, advised, notwithstanding his personal preference for the Roman law, that the national institutions be respected. The great bishop, moreover, had received from the Supreme Pontiff, for the religious government of England, very extensive powers, that made him a sort of pope

³³ *Reg.*, XI, 76.

³⁴ *Reg.*, I, 56.

³⁵ *Loc. cit.*

³⁶ Kurth, *Les origines de la civilisation moderne*, II, 34.

³⁷ *Reg.*, IX, 12.

³⁸ *Reg.*, I, 45.

in that distant realm: ³⁹ power to create, in the southern part of the great island, twelve episcopal sees, dependent on the metropolitan see of Canterbury; even power for the north, where twelve other sees were to be connected with the metropolitan see of York.

Augustine did not have time to carry out this program. The date was 601, four years before his death. He chose one of his most zealous disciples, Lawrence, to be his successor, and consecrated him bishop. Additional helpers had come to him from Rome. He conferred the episcopal office on Justin and Mellitus. The former was put at the head of the Church of Rochester, the latter over the Church of London. These two Romans of the old stock continued Augustine's wise policy. Sebert king of Essex received baptism and, in concert with his uncle, Ethelbert king of Kent, built St. Paul's Cathedral in London, Mellitus' see.⁴⁰

Now Mellitus was troubled with infirmities of the body, that is to say, with the gout, yet, notwithstanding, the walking of his mind was sure and sound, and passing over speedily all earthly things he hied him fast to heavenly things, which are ever to be loved, to be wished and to be sought for. . . .

In a word I will rehearse one token of his good power by which the rest may be understood. When upon a certain time the city of Canterbury was from fault or negligence taken with fire and began to consume away by much increasing of the flames, so that no man by casting of water was able to stay it, the greatest part of the city being at length near burnt and the furious flashes extending themselves to the bishop's palace, the bishop trusting in God's help, where the help of man now failed, commanded that he might be carried out of his house and set against these fierce flaws of fire flying all round about. . . .

³⁹ This was the expression used by Urban II at a council, when introducing one of St. Augustine's successors: *Includamus in orbe quasi alterius orbis papam.*

⁴⁰ Of this early church there still remain, near the walls of the vast present church, two or three bases of columns in a garden.

When the bishop by the hands of his servants was brought thither, he began with prayer, sick as he was, to drive away the peril which the stout strength of strong men with much labor could not before bring to pass. And behold, the wind that blew from the south, first drew off the blast of his fury from hurting the places right over in the other side, and straightway sinking utterly to rest, stayed his blowing, while the flames in like manner were quieted and died out.⁴¹

Conversion of England

The conversion of the pagans remained as the last part of St. Gregory's program. He had said to St. Augustine: "Instruct the ignorant, strengthen the weak by persuasion, correct only evil-doers by authority."⁴² King Ethelbert conformed to these instructions. "He had learned," says Bede, "of the masters and authors of his salvation that the service of Christ must be voluntary and not forced."⁴³ The kingdom of Northumbria was won to the faith in 625 by the monk Paulinus. Venerable Bede gives us an epic account of the weighty and solemn assembly following which Northumbria abjured paganism. King Edwin, already convinced by private conversations with Paulinus, decided, before he would allow Paulinus to preach, to ask the advice of the notables of his kingdom. He therefore assembled them. When he had set forth the purpose of the meeting, one of the leaders, as spokesman for all, rose up and said:

O king, you perhaps remember that, when you were seated at table with your captains and men of arms, when a good fire was lighted and your hall became warm, but outdoors was cold with wind and rain and snow, there came a little bird that flew across the hall, entering by

⁴¹ Bede, Bk. II, chap. 7; *PL*, XCXV, 93.

⁴² *Indocti doceantur, infirmi persuasione roborentur, perversi auctoritate corrigantur.* *Reg.*, XI, 56.

⁴³ *Didicerat enim a doctoribus auctoribusque suae salutis servitium Christi voluntarium, non coactitium debere esse.* Bede, Bk. I, chap. 26; *PL*, XCV, 57.

one door and going out by another. For that bird the few moments of that flight were full of sweetness, he no longer felt the rain and the storm; but those moments were brief. The bird passed in the twinkling of an eye; from winter it passed again into the winter. Such, it seems to me, is the life of man on earth, and his short course compared to the length of time preceding him and following him. We are tormented by the impossibility of knowing about it. . . . If this new doctrine can teach us anything with a little certainty, it is right that we should follow it." The King thereupon directed the missionary to speak about the God he was announcing. After Paulinus finished, the chief of the warriors spoke, saying: "Up to this present, the more I searched for truth, the more it seemed to flee from me. But as I was listening to this man, I kept understanding better that his doctrine is able to give us life, salvation, and happiness."

All at once they began to pull down the idols and build altars to the true God.

Birinus preached the Gospel in Wessex, Felix in East Anglia, Aidan in Mercia, Wilfrid in Sussex; Jaruman brought the East Saxons to the faith. By 685 the triumph of Christianity was complete in England. A little while later the seven states of the Heptarchy, united in the bond of faith, were able to form a solid political unity under King Egbert the Great, the real founder of the English monarchy.

The Church meanwhile had been laboring to pacify the racial rivalries persisting between the Celts and the Saxons. A letter of St. Gregory, instead of considering the Britons as schismatics, placed their bishops under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Canterbury.⁴⁴ The animosity between the two races did not completely disappear, but little by little it moderated. As Rome became more tolerant, Britain became more trustful. The Britons' customs in connection with the observance of Easter, baptism ceremonies, and other matters, were abolished in a council held in 664. Ireland and Scotland adopted the Roman

⁴⁴ *Ep.*, XI, 64.

practice forty years later ; then at last it was the turn of Wales.⁴⁵

Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* contains an account of the discussion that preceded the adoption of the Roman practices by the Northumbrians. The controversy between the Northumbrian Bishop Colman and the monk Wilfrid, who had been educated at Rome, concerned the date of Easter. The discussion took place in the presence of King Oswin. Colman appealed to the authority of the Apostle St. John, Wilfrid to that of St. Peter. Wilfrid quoted our Lord's words, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church."

When Wilfrid thus concluded, the King said : "Were these things, Colman, indeed spoken to that Peter of our Lord?" And the Bishop said : "They were indeed, my lord king." Whereat the King saith : "Can you bring forward any so special authority given your Columba?" Whereon the Bishop said : "No." Again the King said : "Whether do ye both agree in this without any question, that these words were principally spoken unto Peter, and that unto him the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given of thy Lord?" They answered : "Yea, certainly." Whereon the King thus concluded and said : "And I say unto you, that I will not gainsay such a porter as this is ; but as I know and have power, I covet in all points to obey his ordinances ; lest it may be, when I come to the doors of the kingdom of heaven, I find none to open unto me, having his displeasure who is proved to hold the keys thereof."

When the king so spoke, all that sat or stood by, the greater along with them of mean degree, gave their consent thereto ; and abandoning their former imperfect usage hastened to change over to those things which they had learned to be better.⁴⁶

St. Theodore

It was not till the middle of the eighth century that the Celtic bishops finally entered into relations with their metropolitan of

⁴⁵ Kraus, *Kirchengeschichte*, sec. 65, p. 257.

⁴⁶ Bede, *History of the Church of England*, Bk. III, chap. 25 ; *PL*, XCV, 162 f.

Canterbury, who was then Archbishop Frithona, better known as Deusdedit.⁴⁷ His zeal prepared the way for his illustrious successor, St. Theodore, who is rightly called the second founder of the Church in England. He was born at Tarsus in Cilicia. Consecrated bishop of Canterbury at the age of sixty-six, Theodore, during the twenty-three years of his episcopate, brought about the definite religious union of all the dioceses of Great Britain.

He died at the age of eighty-eight. Few lives have been so fruitful in good works as was the venerable old age of the holy archbishop. In 675 he assembled the first council of England, which was followed by a large number of others. The introduction of parish life, the reform of monastic life, and the beginning of an intense intellectual life in Great Britain, are his chief claims to the gratitude of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Until his time religious services in England had been performed by wandering missionaries. At the foot of a cross in some field they celebrated mass, preached the Gospel, and administered the sacraments. Henceforth priests were assigned to the service of the church, put in charge of a defined territory, and obliged to residence. The churches, built mostly by charitable nobles, who endowed them and in return obtained the right of nominating the incumbents, were the center of parish life.⁴⁸ The demands of a very active and extended apostolate had altered in the monasteries that life of silence and recollection in solitude which St. Benedict was especially concerned to safeguard for his monks. Theodore remedied this situation by wise, firm counsel.⁴⁹ He also prevented encroachment by the monasteries upon the functions special to the parish clergy.⁵⁰

Theodore, who had been educated in the schools of the East,

⁴⁷ Hook, *Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury*, I, 131.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁴⁹ *Rules of the Council of Hertford* (673); Bede, Bk. IV, chap. 5.

⁵⁰ Theodore, *Poenitentiale*, chap. 6; *PL*, XCIX, 930 f.; *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, p. 306.

knew from experience the help which a well directed intellectual culture could give to Christian civilization. It is said that in his monastic traveling-bag he carried a Homer, which he read every day.⁵¹ Aided by his faithful companion, the monk Adrian, who came from the monastery of Nisida in Thessaly, he spread, along with the study of the sacred sciences, the study of the ancient classical languages. As Bede informs us, sixty years after Theodore's death, monks were speaking Greek and Latin with as much facility as Anglo-Saxon.⁵² The seven liberal arts were also taught in the monasteries.⁵³ Theodore sent to Rome for masons to teach the Roman manner of building. Big churches began to rise up beside the humble primitive chapels.

Venerable Bede

In this atmosphere the famous Bede was educated. His learning and virtues won for him the title of Venerable; the title of saint, which the Church bestowed upon him, has not effaced that other glorious title of Venerable. Born in 673, four years after St. Theodore's arrival in England, he was a descendant of that strong race of the Angles to which he was proud to belong.⁵⁴ This "father of English history and of English learning,"⁵⁵ was educated in the monastery of Wearmouth and in that of Jarrow, which St. Benedict Biscop had just founded. As he himself tells us, at an early age he was fond of consulting all the testimonies, all the traditions, all the books.⁵⁶ Chronology, cosmography, theology, poetry, history, Bede explored all the branches of human knowledge: in each and all he ex-

⁵¹ Godwin, *De praesulibus Angliae*, p. 41.

⁵² Bede, Bk. IV, 2.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Bede, *De temporum ratione*, chap. 15.

⁵⁵ This is the title given him by Burke, *Essay on English History*, Bk. II, chap. 2.

⁵⁶ *History of the Church of England*, preface.

celled. Says Lavissee: "Bede is first of all an historian. And, as he shows in his *Ecclesiastical History of England*, he had an ability in gathering and weighing evidence, in grouping facts, in understanding and explaining the sequence of events, in rising above things in order to judge them."⁵⁷ Says Auguste Molinier: "Bede wrote an excellent summary of the national traditions of England, and in this work the form is of equal merit with the contents. Bede's example is there to prove what a small group of active, enlightened people can do for civilization. Converted less than a century before by a handful of Italian missionaries, Great Britain became an intense home of learning and faith, and soon paid back to the continent the services it received from Italy."⁵⁸

Learning and faith, a passion for knowledge and a thirst for prayer, accompanied this great man to his last hour. Nothing could be more touching than the account of his death, which one of his disciples has left us in a letter. We quote from it as follows:

On the last day of his life one of his close friends, who remained at his side to give him any needed care, said to him: "Beloved master, one chapter more is needed to complete your book. Would it tire you to speak longer?" Bede answered, with a voice weakened by suffering: "I can still speak. Take your pen, cut its point, for time is urgent." The vesper hour having come, the disciple again said to him: "Beloved master, there is left one verse not yet written." "Write it quickly," he replied. The young man wrote down what was dictated and then declared: "Now it is finished." To this Bede answered: "You say well, it is finished. Raise my head with your hands and turn me so that I may have the comfort of looking toward the spot where I have prayed so much." Thus stretched out on the floor of his cell, he began chanting for the last time in the customary tone of the Gregorian melody: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; and

⁵⁷ Lavissee, *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, December 15, 1886, p. 867.

⁵⁸ Molinier, *Les sources d l'histoire de France*, V, xxiv f.

while he was uttering these divine names, his soul left his mortal body.⁵⁹

The Popes and the English

The principles of Christian civilization, preached by the Church, gradually became incorporated in the laws. After the laws of Ethelbert which, at the beginning of the seventh century, were scarcely more than a penal code listing and fining various bodily injuries,⁶⁰ after the laws of Lothaire and Edric which, at the end of the seventh century, marked a progress in the social organization and the conception of right and wrong,⁶¹ the laws of Witraed, at the beginning of the eighth century, indicate the appearance of a better regulated parliamentary life.⁶² The laws of Alfred the Great, at the close of the tenth century, perfect that legislation and bring it into accord with the Christian spirit.⁶³

But this social movement had its origin in the Christian missions begun by St. Augustine and inspired by St. Gregory the Great. One scholar has written that in his opinion England owes to that early preaching of the Gospel regard for the rights of the family and for the rights of the individual.⁶⁴ A more recent historian even declares that St. Gregory's letters to St. Augustine deserve a place in the national archives of Great Britain ahead of the *Declaration of Rights* and ahead of the *Magna Charta*.⁶⁵ The great island that, at the end of the sixth century, had such a reputation for barbarity as to halt the companions of St. Augustine, the island where so many pagan customs persisted, produced marvelous fruits of holiness.

⁵⁹ *PL*, XC, 65; *Acta sanctorum*, May, Vol. VI.

⁶⁰ *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, pp. 1-10.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-15.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 16-19.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-44.

⁶⁴ Mignet, *Mémoire sur l'introduction de la Germanie dans la société civilisée*.

⁶⁵ Pingaud, *La Politique de saint Grégoire le Grand*, p. 260.

Great Britain became the "Island of Saints." Those Anglo-Saxons and Britons, so jealous of their independence, gradually were imbued with gratitude to that Latin world, that Christian religion, that Rome, from which the blessing of civilization had come to them. A time came when "all eyes were turned toward the capital of the world. Each year large numbers of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims set out: monks and nuns, priests, bishops, and nobles. When they came in view of the holy city, they stopped to contemplate the sight and knelt in prayer. Their first visit was to the tomb of St. Peter. So strong did the attraction become that even kings yielded to it. In 689 the Saxon King Kadwal went to Rome with the purpose of ending his days in a monastery there. Twenty years after Kadwal's death, Conrad of Mercia and Otto of Essex followed his example. Thus did kings consider it a supreme glory to go to Rome, be clothed in the monastic habit, and there die where a hundred years before a Roman monk met some young Anglo-Saxons in the slave-market. A century sufficed for Britain, conquered by priests, to become a papal province,⁶⁶ as a century had sufficed for Gaul, conquered by the legions, to become one of the most Roman of the imperial provinces."⁶⁷

When the English set out for Rome, it was not always with the idea of dying there. They went also to obtain the light and strength they needed to bear to their pagan brethren the treasure of faith which they had received from the Eternal City.

It was from England there went to Rome, to receive instructions from Pope St. Gregory II, the greatest perhaps of the missionaries of the barbarian world, St. Boniface.

⁶⁶ A century was enough to arouse in the faithful this devotion to Rome, but not to extirpate all paganism from the island.

⁶⁷ Lavissee, *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, December 15, 1886.

CHAPTER VII

The Church among the Germans

HE who would devote his life to the conversion of Germany, organize the Christian communities situated beyond the Rhine, exercise there a sort of vice-papacy,¹ he, "whose influence upon the destinies of the German people would have no equal except in the case of Charlemagne,"² was born about the close of the seventh century in the kingdom of Wessex in England.

St. Boniface

The exact place and date of his birth are unknown. It has been conjectured that he was born in 680 in the town of Crediton (or Kirton). His name was Winfrid. His family must have belonged to the nobility, for his letters show that he was connected with personages of high rank. When Winfrid was not more than five years old, he first manifested his vocation to the life of a missionary monk. At that time churches were rare in the kingdom of Wessex and, in all likelihood, southern England had no priests attached to definite places. Big crosses, erected by noblemen on their domains, were the usual centers for public worship. The faithful came there to pray. Monks came along from time to time, preached to the people at the foot of these crosses, and there administered the sacraments. The boy's imagination was stirred by these sights. He declared that

¹ Substantially this is what several popes said. Gregory III called him : *Bonifacium, nostrum agentem vicem* (Jaffé, no. 2247). Pope Zachary wrote to him as follows : *Tua sanctitas sedis apostolicae et nostram praesentat vicem*. Jaffé, *Monumenta moguntina*, p. 190.

² Kurth, *Saint Boniface*, p. 173.

he wanted to share the apostolic life of these itinerant priests. When seven years old, he entered Exeter Abbey as an oblate; from there soon afterward he went to Nutshalling Abbey near Winchester. Here he successfully studied letters and sciences. We are told by his earliest biographer³ that he excelled in the interpretation of Scripture and in poetry.

Soon Winfrid became a brilliant teacher in that Nutshalling Abbey where he had been a brilliant student. But the idea of his boyhood kept pursuing him. Perhaps he heard mention of that Mellifont monastery,⁴ located in the heart of Ireland, the monastery which a group of young Anglo-Saxons made a sort of missionary seminary.⁵ One of those monks, the most earnest of them, St. Egbert, had taken a vow never to set foot again on his native soil. The objective of the young apostles was that land of Frisia, reputed to be one of the most pagan of all countries, where English ships, which set out from the Thames or the Humber for the continent, were accustomed to stop.⁶ It was toward that damp and swampy coast of Frisia that the eyes of the young Nutshalling professor persistently turned. "It is the land of our forefathers," he said. Later, upon reaching the frontiers of Saxony, he recommended to the prayers of his friends in England these pagan brethren "who are of the same flesh and blood." The wisdom of the young monk's superiors let that vocation mature and when, at the age of thirty, the monk Winfrid received ordination to the priesthood, he was able to set out with three of his brothers in religion.

It was the year 716. The political situation in Saxony was as unfavorable as possible for the undertaking of a mission. The Christian centers which the zeal of a few Anglo-Saxon monks

³ The monk Willibald, who wrote the life of St. Boniface at the request of and upon information received from St. Lullus, the disciple and successor of the apostle of Germany. *PL*, LXXXIX; Mabillon, *Acta sanctorum O.S.B.*, third century.

⁴ Bede, *History of the Church of England*, V, 9.

⁵ St. Boniface declared that in him was united a great fondness for traveling with religious zeal: *Nos timor Christi et amor peregrinationis separavit*. Jaffé, II, 86.

⁶ Moeller, *Histoire du Moyen Age*, p. 445.

—including St. Wilfrid and St. Willibrord—had founded under the protection of Pepin of Heristal, had just been laid low by a great calamity. In 714 Ratbod the duke of Frisia had profited by Pepin's death to stir up the people against the Franks. The Christian Churches were wiped out and Willibrord was obliged to return to England.

Most historians suppose that Winfrid's idea was to go to Frisia merely to reconnoiter. In any event, he must have noted, with the positive spirit of his race, that effective activity would be impossible for him until he was furnished with a formal commission from the head of the Church and was supported by the powerful authority of the chief of the Franks.⁷ This was also the view of his superiors. Two years later, at the beginning of the winter of 718, the monk Winfrid, bearing a letter from his bishop, Daniel of Winchester,⁸ left England with a caravan of pilgrims who went to Rome, and presented themselves to Pope Gregory II.

St. Boniface at Rome

Worthy successor of St. Gregory the Great, Pope St. Gregory II, who was elected in 715 to succeed Pope Constantine, was just the one to grasp the project of the Anglo-Saxon monk. "His morals were pure," says the *Liber pontificalis*, "his mind cultivated, his courage full of constancy, his fearlessness remarkable in defending the rights of the Church against the attacks by her enemies."⁹ The Pope listened to the ardent missionary, asked him to come again, kept him in Rome for a whole year, and had frequent conversations with him. Then, understanding what he might expect from such an auxiliary, and convinced that Winfrid was the man destined by Providence

⁷ Kurth, *Saint Boniface*, pp. 18 f.

⁸ *MGH, Epistolae merovingici et Karolini aevi*, Dümmler ed., I, 257.

⁹ *Lib. pont.*, I, 396.

for the conversion of the last German peoples, he said to him: "Go; henceforth you shall be called Boniface, he who does good." And the Pope gave him a bull conferring on him all the powers necessary for organizing the mission of Germany. Boniface—thus we will now call him, because from this time on he signs all his letters with this name—had had ample leisure to study the prudent traditions of papal policy while he was close to Gregory II in that old Rome, which seemed to have preserved the administrative genius of the old Roman people. To the tenacity of the Anglo-Saxon, Boniface added, in the performance of the great mission entrusted to him, the organizing spirit of the Roman. Moreover he resolved to make no important decision without first referring the matter to the Holy See.

A vast and difficult mission it was to preach the Gospel throughout Germany, to organize the German Church, to reorganize the Frankish Church, to bring the faith into Frisia and, if God permitted, into Saxony.

The Romans gave the name Germany to the portion of land between the Rhine and the Danube. It was also called Roman Germany. It embraced three nations: in the middle was Thuringia, at the west was Alamannia, which occupied both banks of the Rhine, in the southeast Bavaria, which also extended to the other side of the Danube. This eastern part, located beyond the river, had not felt the Roman influence. Christianity had been preached in Thuringia by the Irish monk St. Kilian, in Alamannia by disciples of St. Columban, the most famous of whom was St. Gall, in Bavaria by Frankish bishops, such as St. Emmeran of Poitiers and St. Corbinian of Chartres.

But a pagan reaction, provoked by the nearness of Saxony and favored by dissensions and wars, had to a great extent destroyed the work of those missionaries. Christianity no longer existed in Roman Germany except in a sporadic condition, and

the Churches there were without any regularly constituted hierarchy. In barbarian Germany, that is, in Frisia and Saxony, the situation was even more deplorable. A relative peace had enabled St. Willibrord to return to Frisia, where he attempted to reconstitute the fragments of his little Christian foundation. Saxony, by its remote location at the northern extremity of Germany and by its frequent relations with the peoples of the Scandinavian peninsula, remained the classical country of paganism.

Boniface was not dismayed by the danger. He went directly to Frisia, the land that had aroused his first zeal. There he found Willibrord, who desired to take him as coadjutor bishop. Boniface, whether frightened by this honor or whether for some other reason he thought his undertaking would be premature in Frisia, judged it better, since the Pope had given him powers for all of Germany, to withdraw, at least temporarily, to central Germany.

St. Boniface in Germany

The life of St. Boniface, written by Willibald, gives us but few details about this first period of his mission, extending from 719 to 722. From his letters, however, we know that his two major concerns were to strive against the paganism and to recruit helpers. In all his perplexities of conscience he consulted his old bishop, Daniel. From a letter of Bishop Daniel we learn what method Boniface followed in preaching to the pagans. It may be summed up in three rules: (1) not to make a violent attack upon the pagan errors, but, after letting the infidels freely explain the dogmas of their religion, to show them, calmly and quietly, the contradictions and lacunae therein; (2) in opposition to their beliefs, to set forth a simple general view of the Christian religion, "that they may be confounded rather than exasperated"; (3) to be careful never to assume a tone of

provocation or insult, but rather that of gentleness and moderation.¹⁰

The enlisting of apostolic workers must have been hard. We see Boniface appealing to two natives, Dettic and Deoric. Christians by baptism but half-idolatrous in the practice of their religion, they showed in Boniface's service a genuine good will, which the missionary utilized. It seems that he made them catechists.

Very near Trier the apostle profited by an altogether providential vocation, that of a young prince of the Merovingian family. The many pilgrimages of Christians from England led to the foundation of monasteries on the main highways of Germany. These religious houses had, as their chief function, the providing of hospitality to devout travelers on their way to and from Rome. In the Moselle valley one of these hospices had as abbess Addula. One day Boniface stopped at the convent. There with the holy and noble abbess was her grandson, a fourteen-year-old boy. Just as the sight of the itinerant monks of England had aroused the vocation of the young Winfrid, so the sight of Boniface and conversation with him touched the heart of the young Frankish prince. He said to his grandmother: "I want to follow my father Boniface, become his disciple, and learn from him the explanation of the divine books." The abbess offered objections to this idea, but he replied: "If you are unwilling to give me a horse, I will go on foot." The boy's insistence succeeded. He left with Boniface and never quit him thereafter. "They labored together," says his biographer, "until the day when martyrdom crowned the apostle's glorious career."¹¹ The boy's name was Gregory; the Church

¹⁰ *Non insultando aut irritando, sed placide et magna cum moderatione. PL, XXXIX, 707-709; MGH, ibid., p. 272.*

¹¹ *MGH, Scriptores, XV, Part I, p. 63.* Father Merishman, O.S.B. (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, VII, 21) says: "On account of the similarity of names . . . Addula has been frequently confounded with Adala, daughter of Dagobert II of Austrasia, thus falsely making Gregory a scion of the royal house of the Merovingians. [Tr.]

honors him as a saint. "There are many stains of blood and dirt upon the Merovingian dynasty, but a page like that of the vocation of this boy brightens it with the smile of divine grace."¹²

Boniface was in Germany about three years when the Pope called him to Rome. The first result of Boniface's apostolate had proved to the Supreme Pontiff that the Anglo-Saxon missionary was ready to labor in a vaster field and with broader authority. Gregory II consecrated him bishop of Germany, without any definite episcopal see, as St. Gregory the Great had done in the case of St. Augustine. Boniface took the oath of the suburbicarian bishops, which placed him in immediate and very special subordination to the bishop of Rome. Provided with a collection of the conciliar canons and letters of recommendation to the princes and bishops whose territories he would cross, he went forward to the northeast of the region he had evangelized, toward Hesse and Thuringia, where paganism was more powerful and the state of the Christian communities more seriously disordered.

This second mission, longer, harder, and more important than the preceding one, lasted from 723 to 745. As soon as he reached there, Boniface realized that the means of the apostolate previously employed would be insufficient. Two new procedures marked this second phase of his apostolic life: appeal to the protection of the Frankish princes and the foundation of monasteries.

Upon reaching Hesse, at sight of the humanly insurmountable obstacles that rose up before him the new Bishop of Germany seems to have been momentarily dismayed by the perspective of his isolation and the fear of his powerlessness. He questioned whether the intervention of the secular power would be necessary for him to correct the bad Christians and repress the audacity of the pagans. One of the natural sons of

¹² Kurth, *Saint Boniface*, p. 26.

Pepin of Heristal, Duke Charles, later called Charles Martel, had just driven back the Saxons to the mouth of the Weser. It was to him that Boniface turned. To his spiritual adviser, the old Bishop Daniel of Winchester, he wrote: "Without the favor of the prince of the Franks, I feel myself unable to govern my people; without the backing of his orders and the dreaded influence of his name, I will never succeed in putting an end to the sacrilegious ceremonies of the pagans."¹³ The prudent Bishop answered that Boniface must put his hope above earthly princes, in God alone, and reminded him of the example of the Apostles, of the martyrs, and of our Lord Himself.¹⁴

Boniface soon understood how wise this counsel was. We rightly regard Charles Martel as the armed champion of the Christian cause, and perhaps he deserves to be called the savior of the Church in France and Germany. What would have happened to it if he had not stopped the advance of Mohammedanism in the south and the incursions of pagans in the north? But no less attested than his services, is his brutal seizure of property and persons of the Church, and the corrupt influence of his court upon the prelates and priests he drew to that court. Boniface soon became aware of this. Having been received at the prince's court, he was shocked at the licentious speech and all sorts of scandals he observed there. In a letter to Bishop Daniel he wonders whether it is right for him to set foot in that wicked place.¹⁵ His holy counselor warns him against this other extreme.¹⁶ To the limited extent solicited or accepted by Boniface, Charles Martel's protection was useful to the Church. A former bishop of the country, who had done nothing before the arrival of the new missionary, now sought to profit by Boniface's labors and was not disposed to recognize the latter's jurisdiction. Charles Martel placed his authority at the service of the

¹³ *MGH, ibid.*, p. 329.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 330-333.

¹⁵ *PL*, LXXXIX, 700-702; *MGH, ibid.*, p. 329.

¹⁶ *PL*, LXXXIX, 703 ff.; *MGH, ibid.*, pp. 331 f.

rightful cause, and Boniface was victorious.¹⁷ It was also owing to the prestige which Charles Martel's favor gave him, that the saint was able, from the beginning of his mission in Hesse, to deliver a mighty blow, to cut down a sacred tree, cherished by the pagans, the Oak of Geismar. Boniface and his companions might have paid dearly for their boldness, if they had not been protected by the safe-conduct given them by the mayor of Austrasia, who made the pagans tremble.¹⁸

Monasticism in Germany

But the holy missionary never wished to use the power of the Frankish prince to force conversions. His habitual procedure was the peaceful foundation of monasteries. The monks cleared the ground, opened schools, helped the poor, the sick, and travelers, and gave work to the people of the neighborhood. Little by little the population of their own accord settled around the monastery. A village, a city was founded.

Such was the method of conversion followed by Boniface during his second mission. But to carry it out he needed a large number of fellow-laborers. These he asked from his native land. His countrymen answered his appeal. For several years from southern England a continual stream of priests, monks, and school-teachers flowed to Thuringia and Hesse. There came Lullus, his dear little Lullus, as he called him, his former pupil at Nutshalling Abbey, who would be his successor in the see of Mainz. There came Burchard, whom he made bishop of Würzburg, and Denehard, who became his tireless messenger, and many others.

With the aid of these valuable helpers, he founded several monasteries for men: the most important were those of Amöneberg in Hesse and Ohrdruf in Thuringia.

¹⁷ *PL*, *ibid.*, col. 706; *MGH*, *ibid.*, p. 274.

¹⁸ *PL*, *ibid.*, col. 699; *MGH*, *ibid.*, pp. 270 f.

Not only men, but women, too, widows or maidens, came in large numbers from England, eager to share in the apostolate of Germany. Under Boniface's direction they founded three big convents. The most famous was that of Bischofsheim. Its abbess was a young relative of Boniface himself, the devout and scholarly Lioba. We possess some of her charming letters and of her well composed Latin verses.¹⁹ She brought to the midst of semi-pagan Germany a fragrance of gentle graciousness and exquisite mildness. It seems that it was to her St. Boniface dedicated a poem of two hundred verses in which he introduces the principal Christian virtues.²⁰

These monasteries and convents spread a taste for letters in Germany. To England were sent various products of the country—cloth woven of goats' hair, a fur garment for the aged Bishop of Winchester, shields and falcons for King Ethelbald, an ivory comb and silver mirror for the Queen.²¹ But the abbots and abbesses, and Boniface himself, asked to have copies of scholarly books sent them, and works of poetry and piety that were published in England. "Copy for me," wrote Boniface, "some of Bede's writings; send me a few sparks from the torch that illumines your country."²²

An exchange of more weighty letters was that kept up by the Bishop of Germany with Gregory II, acquainting the Pope with all his labors, consulting him about all doubtful questions. A reply from Gregory II, dated November 22, 726, solves twelve cases of conscience. It enables us to obtain an intimate view of the monastic, liturgical, domestic, and social life of those first Christian centers in Germany.²³ Less important

¹⁹ *PL*, XCIX, 720; *MGH*, *ibid.*, pp. 280 f.

²⁰ *Oenigmata de virtutibus, quae misit Bonifacius ad sororem suam*. *PL*, XCIX, 887-892.

²¹ *PL*, *ibid.*, col. 750; *MGH*, *ibid.*, p. 337.

²² *PL*, *ibid.*, col. 736; *MGH*, *ibid.*, p. 347.

²³ *PL*, *ibid.*, col. 524-526; *MGH*, *ibid.*, pp. 275, 277. These cases of conscience concern impediments of marriage, the administration of baptism and confirmation, the procedure to be followed in cases of denunciations brought against a cleric, the

than the correspondence between St. Gregory the Great and St. Augustine, that of St. Gregory II with St. Boniface merits comparison with it. It had the same purpose and the same result: the conversion and Christian civilization of a great nation.

St. Gregory III, who occupied the papal see from 731 to 741, and St. Zachary, who succeeded him from 741 to 752, continued to aid Boniface with their counsel and to strengthen him with their encouragement. In 732, Gregory III sent him the pallium and directed him to create new dioceses in Germany.²⁴ Boniface consecrated as bishops those of his monks who gave the best evidence of zeal and intelligence in their apostolate. The sees of these bishoprics were so well distributed that the ecclesiastical organization of Germany since then has undergone only minor modifications. "The Church of Central Germany," says the Protestant historian Hauck, "is the work of St. Boniface."²⁵

St. Boniface and the Frankish Church

Boniface was also the reformer of the Frankish Church. Charles Martel died in October, 741, leaving the Frankish Church safe from the outward perils of a Mussulman or Saxon invasion, but a prey to lamentable internal disorders. The disturbances that continued after the death of the great Frankish warrior, the strife that arose between the last representatives of the expiring Merovingian race and the precursors of the Carolingian race, who were grasping for the power, the upris-

régime of the lepers, the frequentation of scandalous Christians, and the like. The Pope's replies are very firm, and yet are impressed with a fatherly condescension.

²⁴ *PL*, LXXXIX, 577 f.; *MGH, Ep.*, I, 278. The formation of new bishoprics has been reserved to the pope only since the year 1000 (Thomassin, *Ancienne and nouvelle discipline*, I, 371). Previously the metropolitans erected them. But the supreme pontiffs always had reserved to themselves a right of control and of superior jurisdiction (Thomassin, *op. cit.*, I, 311).

²⁵ Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, 2d ed., I, 466.

ings of Bavaria and Aquitania, that for the time nearly rent the Frankish nation, aggravated the intensity of the crisis. Intellectual culture was perforce abandoned or much neglected. A curious document of the time, known as the *Indiculus superstitionum*²⁶ and sometimes called the *Syllabus of popular errors* of the seventh century, shows us how many gross superstitions, springing from ignorance, had become prevalent among the faithful. St. Boniface's letters have left us a gloomy picture of the conduct of the clergy. "Religion is trod under foot," he says. "According to what the elders say, the Franks have not held a council for eighty years."²⁷ They have no metropolitan archbishop. The majority of episcopal sees are given to avaricious laymen or adulterous clerics. And those who boast of being without these faults are often drunkards, huntsmen, or soldiers, who shed the blood of Christians like that of the pagans."²⁸ The letter containing these lines was addressed, in 742, to Pope Zachary, who had just succeeded Gregory III. The two princes to whom Charles Martel left a very real power, without a definite title,²⁹ Carloman and Pepin, had asked Boniface to reorganize the Church of Austrasia.³⁰ Carloman and Pepin had been educated in a monastery. Carloman was deeply religious and four years later entered the monastery of Monte Cassino. Pepin was an experienced statesman, and understood the importance of a well-ordered Church in a state that perhaps he was already aspiring to rule with the title of king. Boniface, in the letter just quoted, asked Pope Zachary for the necessary powers to answer the appeal of the Frankish princes. Those

²⁶ Baluze, *Capitularia*, I, 150 ff.

²⁷ St. Boniface makes this assertion only as an echo of the popular tradition. But it is an exaggeration. A few councils were held in Gaul during the second part of the seventh century. Cf. Vacandard, *Vie de saint Ouen*, p. 222 note.

²⁸ *PL*, LXXXIX, 744; *MGH, Epist.*, I, 300.

²⁹ In their capitularies they take the title of *dux et princeps Francorum*.

³⁰ According to Willibald, it was Boniface himself who suggested this request to Carloman.

powers were granted him at once.³¹ But the strife was bitter. Two schemers, Clement a Scot and Adelbert a Frank, made the populace fanatical by laying claim to extraordinary powers. Adelbert adduced in his favor a letter which he alleged was written by Christ and had fallen from heaven to Jerusalem. He found an ignorant bishop to consecrate him. Great multitudes, forsaking the churches, assembled at crosses that Adelbert set up beside a spring. There the people strove with one another for possession of bits of his hair or fingernails as relics.³² Boniface did not relax his attack upon the two impostors until he succeeded in putting them both in prison.³³ Then in several councils, some provincial, others plenary or national, he had decrees issued ordering the stability of the country clergy, its subordination to the bishop, the dependence of the latter upon the metropolitan, and of the metropolitan upon the bishop of Rome. As an insignia of this organization and of the dependence of the entire hierarchy upon the Holy See, the pallium, which in the East was simply a sign of archiepiscopal powers, took on a symbolical meaning, that of a jurisdiction received from Rome with the insignia.³⁴ Two other measures of significance should be noted among the decisions of these councils. One was a sort of consolidation of rural parishes, for the benefit of which the land tithes were established or made general.³⁵ This measure freed them from dependence upon the noblemen and landowners who had established them. The other was a regulation of the clergy's contribution to the expenses of the state in case of war or urgent need. Under such circumstances the state would have a right to keep part of the revenues of the churches, but only as *precaria*, that is, on condition of restitution at the death of

³¹ Dunzelmann, Hahn, and Kurth admit that by error the Pope's reply was dated April 1, 743, and that in reality it was 742. Kurth, *Saint Boniface*, p. 23; Dunzelmann, *Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte*, XIII, 8; Hahn, *ibid.*, XVI, 52.

³² *PL*, LXXXIX, 751-753; *MGH*, *Epist.*, I, 314-318.

³³ *PL*, *ibid.*, col. 753 f.; *MGH*, *ibid.*, p. 314.

³⁴ Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, pp. 384 f.

³⁵ Jaffé, no. 2288; *PL*, *ibid.*, col. 941.

the beneficiary and with the obligation of paying, during that use, an acknowledgment annuity of one silver solidus.³⁶ This regulation was a preventive measure against unjust seizure of Church property, an infringement which Charles Martel had so unfairly practiced on the pretext of financial need. This decision, made in a mixed assembly of bishops and lay lords, has been called the first of the concordats.³⁷ That wise freeing of Church property and hence of the Church herself, with regard to the big landowners and the state, was of capital importance. These regulations, if well observed, would have spared many an abuse in the Middle Ages. When St. Gregory VII seeks to remedy the evil of clerical incontinence and simony, he proceeds as did St. Boniface: he shakes off the yoke of abusive interference by the civil power in the Church. Moreover, the independence demanded by St. Boniface had no resemblance to rebellion or hostility. In the creation of new dioceses and in the selection of persons who were to occupy the new sees, he always sought first an understanding with the secular powers, and Pope Zachary approved his acting in that way.³⁸

The warfare upon popular superstitions was another purpose of the conciliar decisions. The acts of the Council of Leptines (743), almost wholly concerned with combating these vain beliefs, furnish very curious details of the superstitious practices. The danger of those extravagances made Boniface watchful to suppress all odd opinions. He learned that an Irish priest, named Virgilius, was disturbing men's minds by preaching the existence beneath the earth of another world with an-

³⁶ *Concilium Germanicum I*; PL, LXXXIX, 807 f. *Concilium Lepinense*, Mansi, XII, 371. Leptine was a royal domain, near Binche, within the bounds of the present diocese of Cambrai.

³⁷ Moeller, *Histoire du Moyen Age*, p. 427. This concordat was approved by Pope Zachary.

³⁸ For example, in the foundation of the dioceses of Strasburg, Ratisbon, and Passau. *Cum consensu Odilonis ducis eorundem Bajoiorum, seu optimatum provinciae illius*, Zachary wrote to him, *tres alios ordinasses episcopos . . . bene et prudenter egisti*. MGH, *Epist.*, I, 293 (Thomassin, *Ancienne et nouvelle discipline*, I, 305 f.).

other sun and another moon. Boniface wrote about the matter to Pope Zachary, who replied: "If it is well proved that Virgilius has spoken thus, you must convene a council and expel him from the Church. . . . We are addressing to this same Virgilius letters of evocation, so that he may be minutely questioned in our presence and, if found guilty of holding false doctrine, he may be sentenced to canonical punishment."³⁹ We do not know what happened after this, whether the charge was dropped or whether Virgilius was exonerated. We are informed simply that Virgilius was later raised to the office of bishop of Salzburg and that Pope Gregory IX canonized him. His feast is on November 27.⁴⁰

Boniface's influence upon the Frankish Church bore fruit. Soon the great responsibilities of the Church and of the state were in the hands of prelates and abbots very unlike those who had frequented the court of Charles Martel. Among them we must mention Fulrad the abbot of St. Denis, who took an important part in the substitution of the Carolingian dynasty for that of the Merovingians, and Chrodegang bishop of Metz, whose famous Rule, published in 755, exercised so deep an influence upon the future of the clergy of France.⁴¹

Founding of Fulda Abbey

Beginning in 745, Boniface made his permanent residence at Mainz. He had considered fixing his see at Cologne, a city

³⁹ *MGH, Epistolae merovingici et Karolini aevi*, I, 360.

⁴⁰ Mabillon, *op. cit.*, third century. Such is the incident that gave rise to so many charges against the Church. As d'Alembert and Bayle remark, many historians have called Virgilius "a martyr to science and free thought," persecuted by the Pope. But we should note the following facts: 1. it is not true that Virgilius was condemned by the Church; 2. it is very probable that what stirred St. Boniface and St. Zachary was the interpretation given by the people to Virgilius' views, rather than his opinion itself; because Venerable Bede, whose writings were eagerly read by St. Boniface, taught the rotundity of the earth (*De natura rerum*, chap. 46; *PL*, XC, 264 f.); 3. even if St. Boniface and St. Zachary were mistaken about a scientific matter, the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church would in no way be involved.

⁴¹ Of this we will speak later.

closer to that barbarian Germany which he so longed to convert. Some mysterious plots, base revenge by lying prelates whose influence had been ruined by Boniface's reform, caused this project to fail, as likewise the hierarchical organization of the dioceses of Gaul, a plan he had begun to carry out. The holy Archbishop at least had the consolation of crowning his work by the foundation of the Abbey of Fulda. He wrote to Pope Zachary as follows:

It is in an extensive wilderness, in the midst of the nations to whom I have preached, a quiet place suited to recollection; there I have built a monastery. And there I have gathered some monks who, under the Rule of our Father St. Benedict, live happily by the work of their hands. There it is, with the permission of your Piety, I would like to go and give some repose to my old age and sleep after my death. The four peoples to whom, by the grace of God, I have preached the word of Christ, are in the vicinity. With the aid of your prayers, I may still be able to be of some use to them.⁴²

This letter is dated 751. Four years later Boniface's wish was partly realized. His glorious remains, stained with the blood of his martyrdom, were borne in triumph to the Fulda monastery, there to sleep the last sleep. The ten years he passed in the government of the Church of Mainz were ten years of quiet and assiduous labor. His last strength he devoted to the editing of his sermons and the administration of his diocese. He conferred episcopal ordination upon his beloved disciple Lullus and made him his *chorepiscopus*.⁴³ Carloman's entrance

⁴² *PL*, LXXXIX, 778; *MGH, Epist.*, I, 368 f.

⁴³ The *chorepiscopi* (from *χώρα* "region," and *ἐπισκόπειν* "supervise") at that time held a position between that of bishops and that of priests. Says Jacques Zeiller: "The institution of the *chorepiscopate* has lately been closely studied. Efforts have been made to ascertain its precise nature, which for a long time remained rather vague. From these studies it appears that the *chorepiscopi*, or country bishops, at first exercised complete episcopal power and were later subordinated to the city bishops. In the fourth century the canons of various councils restricted their powers and reduced them to the condition of lower members of the hierarchy. But these con-

into the monastery of Monte Cassino left Pepin sole ruler of the Frankish people; and Pope Zachary's death was followed by the election of Stephen II. Boniface wrote to Stephen and to Pepin, asking their authorization for him to name Lullus his successor. A letter from him to the Pope in 753 is a sort of last testament: "I beg your Holiness," he says, "to accord me the friendship of the Apostolic See and union with it. In the course of the thirty-six years during which I have filled the office of Roman legate, I have been able to render some services to the Church of God. For the faults and mistakes I may have committed, I declare that I submit to the judgment of the Church."

But a sadness filled his apostolic soul. The longing of his youth was not fulfilled. Saxony and Frisia, to which he had formerly directed the first efforts of his apostolate, were not converted. And yet, it was the ancestral land. He wrote to his Anglo-Saxon countrymen: "Have pity on these men, who say to you: We are your flesh and blood." And an English bishop said in reply: "I have learned that night and day you think of the conversion of the Saxons. . . . Delay not in gathering so fine a harvest." ⁴⁴

clusions hold true only for the East. In the West we find the chorepiscopate under a different aspect at the time it appeared there, chiefly in Gaul, as a regular institution, while it was disappearing in the East, that is, in the eighth century: the Western chorepiscopi, vested with the episcopal character, were then the coadjutors of the bishop. He delegated his powers to them in a region of the diocese remote from the episcopal city. Thus they possessed a lesser authority than that of the Eastern chorepiscopi of the early period, who were really independent bishops and greater than those of the later period who had lost the episcopal character." Zeiller, in the *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, January 15, 1906, p. 28. Cf. Parisot, "Les chorévêques" in the *Revue de l'Orient chrétien*, VI (1901), 157; Jugie, "Les chorévêques en Orient" in the *Échos d'Orient*, VII (1904), 263; Gilmann, *Das Institut des Chorbischofe im Orient*. In the Middle Ages the title "chorepiscopi" (*chori episcopi*) was given to simple choir masters. Cf. Thomassin, *Ancienne et nouvelle discipline*, II, 339 ff. On the chorepiscopi, see a long and scholarly dissertation by Leclercq, in his new edition of Hefele's *Histoire des conciles*, II, Part II, pp. 1197-1237.

⁴⁴ *MGH, Epist.*, I, 296.

Death of St. Boniface

The aged Archbishop of Mainz, who was then about seventy-five years old, had no hope of reaping the harvest. He gathered all his strength. For Lullus, his chorepiscopus, he wrote his last instructions, which have been preserved for us by the monk Willibald.⁴⁵ Then he embarked on the Rhine accompanied by fifty priests, clerics, monks, and a few armed servants. The flotilla reached the middle of those marshy plains which four centuries later would be partly engulfed and would form the Zuyderzee. The little boats advanced on the canals and small streams that cut through the country. As they went along the missionaries preached to the almost savage inhabitants of the districts. Early in June, 755, the flotilla anchored in the neighborhood of Dokkum, the place which Boniface designated to which the newly baptized of the region were to come to receive the sacrament of confirmation from him.⁴⁶ But on the appointed day, at early dawn, just as the apostle was preparing to celebrate the holy sacrifice, instead of the expected neophytes, an army of pagans suddenly appeared, shouting cries of death. The few servants that were escorting the mission rushed to arms. Boniface stopped them. Then, turning to his companions, he said: "Take courage: all those weapons cannot harm souls." While he was speaking, the pagans fell upon the missionaries and massacred them. One who witnessed the scene relates that Boniface, as he received his mortal blow, raised over his head a book he was holding in his hand. The barbarian's axe at one stroke cut through the book and the martyr's head.

⁴⁵ Willibald, chap. 21; *PL*, LXXXIX, 659. A few years earlier, foreseeing his coming death, he bade farewell to Abbess Lioba, his relative, and her nuns, begging them to continue laboring with perseverance upon that soil of Germany, which he thought he was about to leave. *MGH, Epist.*, I, 335 f.

⁴⁶ After the fifth century, at least in the West, confirmation became gradually separated from baptism.

Thus died the apostle of Germany. His longing was partly realized. He did not witness the conversion of Saxony; that work was accomplished under the hard sword of Charlemagne. On that Saxon land, which would soon be wet with the blood of terrible executions, Boniface poured out the pure, peaceful blood of the martyr, the first fruits of the future Christianity.

CHAPTER VIII

The Church among the Saxons and Scandinavians

WHAT especially marks this new stage in the advance of the Church through the barbarian world, is the positive intervention of the secular power in the work of spreading the faith. Charlemagne's terrible army enveloped the peaceful group of the monks. The Saxony expedition was both a conquest and a missionary undertaking. Yet it would not be quite exact to say that Saxony was converted by force. The use of force, regrettable in so far as it exceeded the requirements of national defense, and for this reason criticized by the most outstanding spokesmen of the Church at that period, was preceded, accompanied, and followed by peaceful missionary methods. The preaching and virtues of four great missionaries—St. Lebwin, St. Sturmio, St. Willehad, and St. Ludger—did more, as we shall see, to change the hearts of these barbarians, than did the sword of Charlemagne. But we can soundly evaluate this work of conversion and conquest only if we take into account the events and the needs of that period.

The Saxons

Charlemagne had succeeded Pepin the Short. More and more the Carolingian dynasty considered itself, and rightly so, as entrusted with a civilizing mission in Europe. Charlemagne was particularly conscious of this providential rôle. If we take this point of view, we may say that the conquest and conversion of Saxony was a matter of necessity. Until the close of the eighth century, the Saxon country had been the support

of every opposition to Roman, Frankish, and Christian influence. In the minds of the Romans that country was confounded with Scandinavia; they called it a factory of nations, *officina gentium*.¹

The conquest and conversion of this race promised to be particularly difficult. The Germans of Saxony and Frisia were the descendants of those "long-sworded" men² whose audacious coming to the continent was related in a symbolic legend. Says the old popular tradition:

One day, some sailors carrying gold asked an inhabitant of the country for food, offering a heap of gold in payment. The native contemptuously handed them in exchange a handful of dirt and went away, satisfied at having deceived the strangers. But at dawn the next day the chieftain of these mariners was seen going back and forth across this vast plain, sowing about him the handful of earth he had been given. His companions at once pitched tents on the ground where the earth had been scattered and, drawing long knives, declared to one another that they were prepared to defend their land. A bloody strife followed, as a result of which the Saxons remained masters of the field.³

More profoundly than the authentic facts of history, popular legends often express the soul of a nation. This legend reveals what boldness this race boasted of.⁴ In any event, of this we are certain, that, as in the case of the Roman generals, neither

¹ Cf. Demolins, *Les routes du monde moderne*, pp. 455 f. Henri de Tourville, *Histoire de la formation particulariste*, chap. 5. *Scandza insula quasi officina gentium* (Jornandès, *The Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, p. 7).

² According to the monk Widukind (a ninth century annalist), the word "Saxon" comes from the word "Sahs" which, in his time, still meant "knife." Widukind, *Res gestae Saxoniae*, in *MGH, Scriptores*, Vol. IV.

³ Widukind, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-7.

⁴ Frederick le Play and especially Henri de Tourville and Edmond Demolins attribute the bold energy of this race to the profession of coastal fishermen which had been followed by their ancestors in Norway. Demolins, *Les routes du monde moderne*, pp. 470 ff.; H. de Tourville, *Histoire de la formation particulariste, origines des grands peuples actuels*, chap. 3.

Pepin of Heristal nor Charles Martel nor Pepin the Short was able to subject the Saxons.

Religion of the Saxons

With no political or religious center, divided into three regions (Ostphal, Westphal, and the Engern district), they preserved the religion of their ancestors more jealously than did the other Germans. Their nomadic brethren more easily broke away from their gods: those gods, connected with the land, did not move with them, but resided in the big trees of their forests, in the caves or on the cliffs of their hill. But the Saxons, a sedentary people, lived in the shade of their sacred woods, especially about that huge tree trunk which they called the pillar of the world, Irminsul.⁵ Moreover, they were not far from Scandinavia, whence their divinities originated. In their sea voyages they could take part in the old mysterious and bloody ceremonies, which were perpetuated on the Scandinavian coasts. Their morality was marked by stern austerity. Their penalties for immorality, especially for adultery, were frightful. St. Boniface, in a letter to the Anglo-Saxon King Ethelbald, tells him, to make him ashamed of his lax morals, what happened in Saxony to a woman or girl who had failed in her duty. Driven from town to town, she was pursued by all the women along her way; these women, armed with whips and pointed knives, struck her and pricked her without let-up, followed her and hounded her until she fell, bleeding and exhausted.⁶

Form of Government

In time of peace everybody lived inviolable in his house and on his land. The Saxons did not have a national dynasty nor,

⁵ *Translatio sancti Alexandri*, chap. 3, in *MGH, Scriptores*, I, 676. This document was written in 863-865, published first in the Göttingen historical library, and included in the *Monumenta* of Pertz. It contains much valuable information about the customs of the Saxons and about the Saxon war.

⁶ *PL*, LXXXIX, 759 f.

so it seems, did they have a general assembly of the nation, unless perhaps in case of extraordinary danger.⁷ Local chieftains governed, with an altogether military discipline, the free men (Frilingen) and the *coloni* (Lazzi). How was it possible for a people so poorly organized for common action to hold out so long against Charlemagne's formidable army? Einhard points out two causes of that long resistance: the incorrigible perfidy of the Saxons, who so many times violated the most solemn oaths, and the unwearied magnanimity of the Emperor, who would never consent to the extermination of this people, but wished simply to win them to Christianity and civilization.⁸

St. Lebwin

Charlemagne's military expedition was preceded by an attempt at peaceful conversion. A monk named Liadwin or Lebwin, like Boniface of Anglo-Saxon origin, had "vowed his life," says his biographer, "to the accomplishment of the union of the Franks with the Saxons in one single Christian faith and charity." At the very boundary between the two states he built a monastery where Saxons and Franks were welcomed as equals and brothers.⁹ Not satisfied with thus preaching to the common people, Lebwin determined to carry the word of God to gatherings of the nobility. One day, when these nobles were assembled at Marclo, as the idolatrous sacrifices were about to begin they saw the monk enter, dressed in his priestly robes and carrying in his hands the cross and the Gospel. He entered their midst and said to them: "Your idols are not living, feeling beings. They are the work of men. They can do nothing for themselves or for anyone else. The true God, the good and just God, sends me to you. If you reject Him, be-

⁷ Those extraordinary assemblies were then held either at the foot of the Irminsul or at Marklo. *Vita Lebuini*, in *MGH, Scriptores*, II, 362.

⁸ Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, chap. 7; *Historiens des Gaules*, V, 91 f.

⁹ *MGH, ibid.*, p. 361; *PL*, CXXXIII, 883-886.

ware; for the King of heaven can send against you a mighty king of the earth." At these words the angered assembly cried out in rage and wanted to put the missionary to death. But a counselor, named Buto, arose and said: "Listen, you who are the weightiest in this assembly. Whenever there has come to us an envoy of some neighboring country, whether Norman, Slav, or Frisian, we have received him in peace, we have listened to him in silence, and we have sent him back with gifts. Now, this man, whom you have just heard, presents himself to you as the ambassador of a great God. You will not put him to death." This appeal addressed by Buto to the traditions of honor of the Saxon people, was heeded, and Lebwin was able to return safe and sound.¹⁰ He was even allowed to preach his doctrine to the people, and he brought about a large number of conversions.

Charlemagne and the Saxons

But the Saxon raids did not cease. Easily crossing a frontier that was in level country, as favorable to invasions as it was difficult to defend, they kept repeating their devastations on Frankish territory. In 772, Charlemagne, in a field of May at Worms, assembled the high officers, bishops, and heads of the chief monasteries of the kingdom. He asked the assembly if it did not consider the hour had come to repress the pagan nation of the Saxons and thus, with the help of God, conquer it for the kingdom of Christ. The entire assembly approved the plan. Then Charlemagne asked the clergy for the help of their prayers. Taking with him a large number of priests and monks, as an ancient chronicler says, "cultivators of the faith, able to place on those people the light sweet yoke of Christ,"¹¹ he set out at the head of his army. The purpose of this first expedition seems to have been merely to terrify the Saxons by

¹⁰ *PL*, CXXXII, 888–890.

¹¹ *Vita S. Sturmii*, chap. 23; *PL*, CV, 441.

a bold stroke. They at once entered Westphalia, where Irminsul was venerated. The idol was overthrown and the treasury of the shrine was pillaged. Disconcerted by the fall of their god, the Saxons let Charlemagne return peacefully to his paternal domain at Heristal and even gave him hostages as pledge of the protection he demanded for the Christian missionaries.¹²

But the very next year the raids began again. The Fritzlar monastery, founded by St. Boniface, was sacked, the church pillaged and turned into a stable. Charlemagne, who was then in Italy, rushed back, and his sudden arrival surprised the Saxons, who asked for a parley.

The King of the Franks decided to hold these negotiations in a setting of solemnity that would impress the barbarians. He set the time of the conference for the date of the field of May, 777, which he held that year at Paderborn in Westphalia. The assembly was marked by a display of magnificent ceremonies. The King decided to receive there, in the presence of the Saxons, the envoys of the Saracens of Spain, who came to beg his help. Then he called upon the monk Sturmio to speak, asking him to set forth to the pagans the doctrines of the Catholic faith. Sturmio abbot of Fulda, a scion of a noble Bavarian family, had been one of St. Boniface's most cherished and valuable helpers. His character combined great austerity with great gentleness toward others. He was trained in the monastic life by a long stay at Monte Cassino where he went to obtain at its source the spirit of St. Benedict, a brother by race of those men whom he wished to convert. Sturmio addressed them with an eloquence that is always persuasive when the speaker's life and character plead for him as forcibly as do his words.¹³ Most of the Saxon chieftains had just sworn allegiance to Charlemagne and many of them asked for baptism, which they

¹² Einhard, year 772, *Historiens des Gaules*, V, 201.

¹³ *Vita S. Sturmii*, chaps. 3 ff.; *PL*, CV, 426 ff.

received in the rivers, say the chroniclers, dressed in white tunics.¹⁴

Widukind and the Saxon Revolt

Not all the Saxon chieftains had come. Says the *Annals of Lorsch*:¹⁵ "To the Paderborn conference came all the Saxons except Widukind, who with certain others continued rebellious and sought refuge in Normandy with his companions." This Widukind, whose name appears here for the first time, was a native of Westphalia and belonged to a rich noble family. He personified the Saxon soul in its refractory attitude to Christian civilization. By his prodigious activity he gave Saxony, or rather that federation of separate groups of Saxons, jealously autonomous and independent, a momentary union in a common feeling and under the action of a single influence.

He withdrew into Denmark to his friend Sigifridus, and there waited for the propitious hour for a revolt. The next year (778), when a rumor spread in Saxony, that Charlemagne along with all his valiant knights had perished at Roncesvalles at the foot of the Pyrenees, Widukind went hither and thither in Saxony, and stirred up the tribes with the hope that they would receive the support of their Danish brethren. In the autumn of that same year "the long-knife men" invaded, ravaged, and covered with blood, not only the borders of Saxony, but Hesse and Thuringia, and even ventured as far as the left bank of the Rhine.

When marauders were passing near Fulda, the monks in the famous abbey were greatly disturbed. Says the author of the life of its holy abbot:

¹⁴ Einhard, year 777, *Historiens des Gaules*, V, 203.

¹⁵ Molinier (*Les sources de l'histoire de France*, I, 226) says: "The *Annals of Lorsch* were regarded in the ninth century as the official history of the Frankish monarch. . . . They were written by clerics of the royal chapel who had access to the archives of the monarchy."

Our father Sturmio, being a man of God, went to the direction from which the danger threatened, for the purpose of attempting to ward off the peril. We, his brethren and disciples, taking the body of the holy martyr Boniface in the coffin where it had rested for twenty-four years, placed it on our shoulders and carried it away to a distance of two days' journey. From there we brought it back to Fulda when quiet was restored.¹⁶

But Charlemagne was not dead. In the spring of 779, returning with his army like a whirlwind, he drove back the Saxons to the depths of Westphalia and the country of the Engrians and forced Widukind once more to flee into Denmark. Then he asked some monks to resume their peaceful missions in Saxony. Among these monks was St. Willehad, who was an Anglo-Saxon like Boniface and, like that great apostle, had heard in his youth an inner voice calling him to spread the faith in Frisia and Saxony. For two or three years Willehad was able not only to preach the word of God to the Saxons, but to build churches and ordain priests, who aided him in his mission.¹⁷

Yet Widukind did not sleep in his retreat. For more than two years he waited patiently for a favorable opportunity, merely sustaining the grudge of the Saxons by frequent messages. In 782 the hoped-for occasion presented itself. Some Slav tribes had invaded Germany at several points. Widukind reappeared. At sight of him the Saxons took up arms and surprised the Franks, making a great slaughter among them. This was the terrible battle of Suntal. All the missionaries dispersed. Willehad was obliged to withdraw and went to Rome, there to wait for better days.

¹⁶ *Vita S. Sturmii*, chap. 24; *PL*, CV, 442; *MGH, Scriptores*, II, 36; *Annales Fuldenses, Historiens des Gaules*, V, 329.

¹⁷ *Vita sancti Willehadi*, *PL*, XCIX, 1017. *Praefato tempore . . . servus Dei coepit ecclesias construere ac presbyteros super eas ordinare, qui libere populis salutis ac baptismatis conferrent gratiam.*

The Capitulary of Saxony

This time Charlemagne could not restrain his wrath. At Verden on the Aller he assembled the Saxon chieftains, who had sworn allegiance to him, and ordered a thorough investigation. The Saxons themselves delivered 4,500 guilty persons into his hands, and these were beheaded that very day. Shortly afterward, in 782, he published the famous Capitulary of Saxony, which inflicted the death penalty not only upon traitors, murderers, and incendiaries, but also upon any Saxon who would reject baptism or refuse to observe the law of fasting by way of showing contempt for Christianity.¹⁸ The Verden execution and the Capitulary of Saxony are regarded as two blots upon the reputation of the great Christian Emperor. But we should not exaggerate the import of those acts. The Verden execution was not a butchery of prisoners, as many historians have called it, but the issue of a veritable criminal trial, carried out according to the summary procedure of military justice.¹⁹

As to the penalties for failure to keep the Lenten regulations, they were to be inflicted only after inquiry by a priest as to the necessity which might have impelled the accused person to eat meat.²⁰ It may be that this right of preliminary inquiry, by which the priest could attenuate the rigor of the law, had been inserted by the King for the purpose of increasing the authority of the clergy in Saxony. Nevertheless official spokesmen of the Church protested loudly. Alcuin wrote to one of Charlemagne's officers: "Faith is an act of the will and is not a forced act. Conscience may be appealed to, it must not

¹⁸ *Si quis jejunium pro despectu christianitatis contempserit*. Baluze, *Capitularia regum francorum*, I, 251 f.; *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae*, arts. 4 and 8.

¹⁹ Cf. Ozanam, *Études germaniques*, II, 295; Lavis, *Histoire de France*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 288.

²⁰ *Sed tamen consideretur a sacerdote, ne forte causa necessitatis hos cuilibet proveniat ut carnem comedat*, Baluze, I, 253.

be constrained by violence. Preachers, not brigands, should be sent to the Saxons.”²¹ A few years later Alcuin wrote to Charlemagne himself, begging him not to crush the Saxons with burdens, but rather to imitate the Apostles, who gave “the milk of the gentle precepts” to peoples whose hesitant faith needed to be dealt with prudently.²²

In 786 Charlemagne requested Pope Adrian to regulate the penance of Saxon *lapsi*. The Pope gave the Emperor wise counsel, asking him to let the priests regulate those penalties of conscience, for in such cases it is necessary to make allowance for the free consent of the will.²³

In fact, neither the merciless execution nor the terrible capitulary brought peace. On the contrary, the Saxons were stirred to reprisals by these rigors and were enthused by the victory of Suntal. They took up arms again with increased fury. For almost three years, each side waged war without quarter. In 785 both nations were exhausted, and Charlemagne offered peace to Widukind, who asked for and received baptism.

Pope Adrian, when informed of this news, ordered that three days of public processions be held in every Christian country²⁴ as an act of thanksgiving.

²¹ *PL*, C, 205 f. This letter of Alcuin is of uncertain date, but is certainly later than the Verden execution and the Capitulary of Saxony. In the Latin there is a play of words which is lost in translation: *Mittantur praedicatores et non praedatores*.

²² *Historiens des Gaules*, V, 612; *Epistola Alcuini ad Carolum Magnum*, anno 798.

²³ *Oportet sacerdotes partibus illis pastorem circumdare vigilantiam, et in eorum arbitrio indicare poenitentiam, considerantes piaculum tam voluntatis quam extra voluntatem coactis ad suum revertentis vomitum*. *PL*, XCVIII, 591; *Historiens des Gaules*, V, 568.

²⁴ *Historiens des Gaules*, V, 568 f. The rest of Widukind's life is lost in legend. In the thirteenth century the minstrels used to sing *The Song of Widukind the Saxon*; some individual churches honored him as a saint; some genealogists made him the ancestor of Robert the Strong. The Saxons also had their legend. According to them, Widukind was converted not by the arms of the Franks nor by the arguments of their missionaries, but by a miracle performed by God Himself in the Holy Eucharist.

St. Ludger

The peaceful missions started again. The principal missionary of this period was St. Ludger, a native of Frisia. He was trained in piety and studies by St. Gregory of Utrecht, whom St. Boniface had met near Trier and made his disciple. Ludger finished his studies at York under the guidance of Alcuin. Ordained priest in 778 at the age of thirty, he wished, out of veneration for St. Boniface whose footsteps he sought to follow, to make his habitual residence at Dokkum, the place made sacred by the martyrdom of the apostle of Germany. But the disturbances of the war, during which he saw Bishop Alberic of Utrecht die of grief, forced him to withdraw beyond the frontiers. He returned after the peace, and in 795, at the boundary between the Franks and the Saxons, founded the monastery of Werden. He died as Bishop of Munster in 809. He was the last of the great apostles of Saxony.

Charlemagne's Clemency

Certain wise legislative acts of Charlemagne seconded his apostolate. An act of Speyer (788), written in lofty terms, declared that Charlemagne, grateful to God for the victory that he owed to Him, granted freedom to the men of Saxony and wished them to be subjects of God alone.²⁵ A capitulary of 797, drawn up after a fresh revolt of Saxons and Frisians, must have been more severe. But the magnanimous Emperor abolished the death penalty in most cases for which it was formerly prescribed, stipulated that the Saxons henceforth were to be judged according to Saxon law, and left to Saxony a large degree of autonomy.²⁶

Thus, says the Saxon poet, Charlemagne's piety and gener-

²⁵ Baluze, I, 249 f.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 275, 280, 405 ff.

osity in a short time accomplished what terror had been unable to do in thirty-three years:

*"Plus regis pietas et munificentia fecit
Quam terror."*²⁷

The Corvey Monastery

The measures of pacification were strengthened by the foundation of several monasteries, the principal one being the monastery of New Corbie. Among the young Saxons that Charlemagne used to bring to France and have educated in his schools, a number had made their religious profession in the celebrated monastery of Corbie near Amiens. In the ninth century this monastery was one of the chief centers of civilization. It was governed at that time by the holy abbot Adalhard, a relative of the King, like him a grandson of Charles Martel.²⁸

To these young monks Adalhard and Charlemagne appealed for the founding of a monastery in Saxony. One of the monks, Theodrat, a Saxon of noble birth, indicated where the new foundation should be located. "I know," he told them, "on my father's property a suitable place, provided with an abundant water supply." It was at the mouth of the Weser, in a splendid location. Charlemagne died without seeing his project realized. But Louis the Pious favored the execution of the plan. A brother of Adalhard, Wala by name, who had earlier been in Saxony at his royal relative's side in command of the armies of Germany, returned there in the habit of a Benedictine monk and was in charge of the foundation, with another monk, named Adalhard. That was in 815. The beginning was difficult. But in 823 Emperor Louis royally endowed the monastery, which took the name of *Corbia nova*, from which the Germans made the name Corvey. Corvey was for Saxony what

²⁷ *Poeta saxo*; PL, XCIX, 719; *Historiens des Gaules*, V, 167. The *Poeta saxo* (ninth century) put into verse the *Annales regii*, or *Annales de Lorsch*.

²⁸ *Vita sancti Adalhardi*; Mabillon, *Acta sanctorum O.S.B.*, fourth century, p. 710.

Fulda had been for northern Germany and St. Gall for southern Germany. Its efforts were directed to the education and training of the people, the cultivation of the arts and sciences, and the propagation of Christianity among the pagans of northern Europe. The scholarly teachers that came from the old Corbie soon gave it a fame that kept growing: such were Paschasius Radbertus, renowned for his learning, Gislemar, who subsequently baptized Harold king of Denmark, and Ansgar the apostle of the Danes and Swedes.

St. Ansgar

Ansgar (or Anscharius), born in Picardy in 801, had taken the monastic habit at the Corbie monastery. He was school-master at Corvey and had just been ordained priest in 826 when King Harold of Denmark sought the help of Louis the Pious. It was a prompting of mistaken zeal that led the Emperor hastily to propose baptism to the Danish envoys, who frequently, from a desire to be agreeable or from interested motives, consented to receive instruction and be baptized. These conversions were sometimes scandalous. The monk of St. Gall relates the following incident: "One day an old Dane to whom a somewhat worn garment was given by way of a neophyte's robe, handed it back, saying: 'This is the twentieth time I have received baptism among you, and all the other times I was given a suitable garment. This rag is fit for an ox-driver, not for a warrior.'"²⁹ King Harold, instructed by Bishop Ebbo of Reims, was baptized in the month of May in the palace at Ingelheim, along with his wife, his son, and four hundred of his warriors. He later returned to paganism. Ansgar, who was present at the baptismal ceremony, may have been dubious about the King's perseverance. At any rate, he understood that the Normans,³⁰ as they were called, would

²⁹ *Monach. sangallensis, PL, CXXIX; Historiens des Gaules, V, 134.*

³⁰ At that period the men of the North were generally called Normans.

have to be reached by a more serious apostolate. He asked leave to depart with the King to bring the Gospel into the countries of the North.

The Normans

Even with the King's favor, the undertaking faced great perils. Charlemagne himself was alarmed at the thought of the dangers which he foresaw were in store for Christianity at the hands of these Norman pirates. "One day," says the monk of St. Gall, "as Charlemagne was at a window facing the sea, he perceived some ships of these terrible marauders. Thereupon the great man began weeping as he said: 'If, while I still live, they dare approach this coast, what will they do to those who come after me?' " ³¹ In their small oaken ships, sometimes in little boats made of willows lined with animal skins, they terrorized the shores of western Europe. Writing to a friend, Sidonius Apollinaris says:

Sometime you may meet the curved ships of the Saxons, in whose every oarsman you think to detect an arch-pirate. Captains and crews alike, to a man they teach or learn the art of brigandage; therefore let me urgently caution you to be ever on the alert. For the Saxon is the most ferocious of all foes. He comes on you without warning; when you expect his attack he makes away. Resistance only moves him to contempt. Shipwrecks to him are no terror, but only so much training. His is no mere acquaintance with the perils of the sea; he knows them as he knows himself. ³²

The songs of their poets, which they were fond of repeating in the midst of storms or the confusion of battles, breathed a daring and ferocity unequalled. Says one of them: "I was born in the high lands of Norway, among a race that is clever in handling the bow; but I preferred to raise my sail, a terror to

³¹ *Monach. sangallensis*, CXXII; *Historiens des Gaules*, V, 130.

³² Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.*, Bk. VIII, 6.

the farmers of the coast." Another song says: "I want to hold in my hand the heart of Hogui. It was torn bleeding from his breast, it was cut out with a blunt dagger. I look upon the heart of Hogui the dauntless; it shakes a little on the platter where it has been laid; it did not tremble when it was in the hero's breast."³³

To these terrible men it was that the monk of New Corbie yearned to preach Christian peace and mercy. His predecessors' failures did not dismay him. Before him St. Willibrord and St. Wilfrid of York had made unsuccessful attempts to preach the faith in Denmark. In 822 Pope St. Paschal, in accord with Louis the Pious, entrusted a second mission to Ebbo archbishop of Reims, accompanied by the monk Halitgar. This Ebbo is a curious figure. He had experienced the extremes of human vicissitudes. Son of a slave of the royal domain, freed by Charlemagne, educated in the palace school, promoted to the government of the important diocese of Reims, he was treated as a friend by the Emperor, whose schoolmate he had been. A few years later, in 833, he covered himself with disgrace by his shameful conduct toward his benefactor. The results of the mission of Ebbo and Halitgar, which lasted from 822 to 824, were doubtful, as was their mission itself. As imperial ambassador and papal missionary the apostle-diplomat negotiated an accord between Harold and his rivals, then baptized a number of the notables of the kingdom. It was a repetition, at the Danish court, of the fruitless ceremonies of the Frankish court.

The monk of New Corbie Abbey had a different ambition. Ansgar was a saint. His sole desire was to shed his blood for Christ. Martyrdom was not granted him, but no sort of persecution was spared his apostolic soul. Says his biographer:

³³ A song taken from the *Edda*, a collection of Scandinavian mythology; Chateaubriand, *Études historiques*, sixth study; Allen, *Histoire du Danemark*, I, 8-33.

"The austerities of his penitential practices, joined to his apostolic labors, took the place of martyrdom in his case."³⁴ He was accompanied by the monk Autbert, who soon became exhausted, had to quit him and return to New Corbie, where he died in 830. Ansgar devoted himself especially to preaching the Gospel, redeeming slaves, instructing children, and catechizing the poor. Not satisfied with preaching the faith in Denmark, he turned his steps toward Sweden. Attacked by pirates and stripped of everything he was taking with him, he reached there destitute of resources. Obtaining his livelihood by manual labor after the example of the Apostle St. Paul, he preached by example even more than by his words, the Christian virtues to the Swedes. In 834 he was consecrated archbishop of Hamburg and was appointed papal legate for the whole region of the North. He was beginning to build churches, open schools, and form a library when, in 837, pirates invaded the city and set it on fire. The young Christian community of Sweden was dispersed.

Ansgar had to wander from Sweden to Denmark, from Denmark to Sweden, until the day when the Pope entrusted to him the government of the Church in Bremen. He who has been called "the apostle of the northern peoples," watched over all the missions of the northern region until the end of his life. He endeavored particularly to train priests who would be able to carry on his work. But an activity of thirty-four years in the most painful labors had worn out his constitution, which at best was not strong. He died at Bremen on February 3 or 4, 865, at the age of 64. His memory should be sacred among the Danes. Few nations have had the favor of receiving the Gospel from an apostle so gentle and yet so austere, so filled with evangelical devotedness and kindness.³⁵

³⁴ *Histoire littéraire de la France*, V, 282; *Vita sancti Anscharii*; *MGH, Scriptores*, II, 683 ff.; *PL*, CXVIII, 1008.

³⁵ Allen, *op. cit.*, I, 60; Bril, "Les premiers temps du christianisme en Suède" in the *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, January 15, 1911, XII, 17-37.

Through St. Ansgar's apostolate the Church reached the most formidable of all the barbarians of the Germanic race, the people from whom the other tribes so long obtained the inspiration of their resistance and perhaps the people whence all the Indo-European races issued forth.³⁶

During this period another family of nations, in contact with Charlemagne's Empire, received the Gospel—the family of Slavic peoples.³⁷ However, before entering upon the account of that conversion, we must consider what had become of another branch of the Germanic race, a branch which, for the sake of orderly treatment, we have had to pass over in silence—the Gothic race.

³⁶ This is the conclusion of the latest ethnographers. See Herman, *Hist. Die Indogermanen*; G. M. Bolling, "The Home of the Indo-Europeans" in *The Catholic University Bulletin*, April, 1907, pp. 211 ff., and Cabrol in the *Revue des questions historiques*, January 1, 1908, p. 277.

³⁷ The Bulgarian King Boris was baptized in 864, one year before the death of St. Ansgar.

CHAPTER IX

The Church and the Arian Nations

AT the time when in the icy North the last groups of the Teutonic race were converted to the Catholic faith, ready to form a great and powerful nation, the final remnants of the Gothic race, undermined by the Arian heresy, were about to disappear on the shores of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean. They were to be met with in Italy, Gaul, and Spain.

The Goths in Italy

Three peoples of Gothic race and Arian religion succeeded one another in Italy after the fall of the Roman Empire. They were the Heruli, the Ostrogoths, and the Lombards.

Odoacer king of the Heruli seemed the very man to take in Italy the place left vacant by the empire he had overthrown. But in reality he was not. It has been said that the entire providential rôle of that daring, uncivilized giant was to give to the imperial edifice the little blow that would bring about its final ruin. The kingdom of the Heruli lasted but a short time. The forces of Turcilinges, Rugians, and Scirri, along with the Romans, formed Odoacer's army, but they were not a homogeneous body of soldiers. Those barbarians, prematurely mingling in a cultured civilization and adopting its vices more readily than its good qualities, were soon more degenerate than the Romans of the decadence. Another barbarous race would give them the fatal blow. These were the Ostrogoths, who found themselves without enough room in Pannonia, where they were settled at the time of the fall of the Hun Empire (454).

Since 474 their leader was a remarkable man, Theodoric, who was brought up at the court of Zeno in Constantinople and there embraced Arianism. Theodoric asked the Emperor for authorization to settle in Italy and drive out Odoacer. In this undertaking he found a means of extending his domination and also an occasion to avenge an insult which the King of the Heruli had offered his relative Frederick, son of the King of the Rugians. Zeno, glad to perform an act of sovereignty over Italy at slight expense, readily granted his permission. The whole nation of the Ostrogoths, warriors and their families in carts, set out across the country of the Gepidae and over the Julian Alps. Odoacer opposed them with all his might. After four years of strife, from 489 to 493, a treaty was signed, leaving Theodoric his conquests and granting Odoacer the title of king. Soon, however, Theodoric, having invited the King of the Heruli to a banquet, slew him with his own hand.

From that moment no one spoke of the kingdom of the Heruli. They scattered and were to be found mingled with various other peoples. They no longer existed as a nation.

The Church had small reason to lament the fall of Odoacer. Despite his declarations of good will, he combined in his own person the defects of the uncultured barbarian and of the degenerate Roman.

The Reign of Theodoric

The Church placed more hope in the people that had just been victorious and especially in their King Theodoric. The period of Ostrogoth domination did, in fact, mark, in the history of Italy, an epoch of brilliant civilization. Perhaps that brilliancy was due less to Theodoric's genius than to his ability in employing men of talent who governed under his supreme authority. This conjecture seems to be justified by the acts of savage brutality that covered with blood the beginning and the

close of his reign. The great reforms were the work of Theodoric's chief minister, the Roman Cassiodorus. The King of the Ostrogoths appears to have been before all else a statesman. This Arian barbarian had the good sense to respect the two institutions that seemed to him the best guaranty of the social order, namely, the Roman legislation and the Catholic Church. The *Edictum Theodorici* is taken entirely from Roman law. As to the Church, he did more than merely leave it free, he protected it many times against violence and schism. He took the side of Pope Symmachus against the antipope Lawrence. In 502 he favored the meeting of the council that exonerated the Pope from the charges made against him. In his reign great men flourished, such as St. Benedict of Nursia, St. Ennodius of Pavia, Dionysius Exiguus, Cassiodorus, and Boethius. St. Benedict we have already spoken of at some length.

Ennodius

Ennodius bishop of Pavia was a rhetorician, the most cultured of the rhetoricians. His prose, overloaded with quotations from Sallust and Cicero, "is often so labored as to be unintelligible";¹ but genuine feeling is to be found in it, and beneath the wordy rhetorician we perceive the man, the Christian, and the bishop. In defense of Pope Symmachus, he expressed a lofty indignation. Although persecuted for his loyalty to the Holy See at the time of his second embassy to Constantinople, he endured insult and contempt with the heroic patience of a true minister of Christ.²

Dionysius

The monk Dionysius, who from humility called himself "the Little" (Dionysius Exiguus), is well known as the one who

¹ Boissier, *La fin du paganisme*, I, 251 ff.

² See his works in *MGH, Auctores antiquiss.*, Vol. VII. Sirmond's edition is to be found in *PL*, LXIII, 13-364.

introduced the use of the Christian era.³ To him we owe also the first collection of conciliar documents. It begins with the famous *Canons of the Apostles*, which were later inserted by Gratian in his *Decretum* and in the Middle Ages were looked upon as truly Apostolic documents. Today all scholars are agreed that they were composed in the fifth century, probably in Syria or Palestine. Dionysius found them in the East. He himself says he is doubtful of their genuineness.⁴ But the fact that they were put in the place of honor in the collection led to their being accepted without investigation.

Cassiodorus

Cassiodorus belonged to an illustrious family of Calabria. He was successively quaestor, private secretary of the King, praetorian prefect, and consul. He was the heart and soul of Theodoric's government. Under the rule of the Ostrogoth King, the development given to general civilization is owing chiefly to him. Ecclesiastical studies and the Christian life are likewise indebted to him. About 540, when he was sixty years old, he withdrew to his Vivarium estate in Calabria, to live there in retirement, study, and prayer, with the monks he had attracted to him. Perhaps he himself became a monk. In any event, this great man's influence upon the development of the monastic institution was considerable.

He was the first one to conceive the monastery as a place of study as well as a place of seclusion for the cultivation of the spiritual life. In the days of his career in the world he had formed, in concert with Pope Agapetus, the project of founding a school for the advanced study of Christian sciences.⁵ As

³ We know that his reckoning was incorrect by several years in fixing upon the year of Rome 754 as the year of the Savior's birth. Our Lord was born at least five years earlier than that date.

⁴ Mansi, I, 59 ff.

⁵ *Nisus sum ergo cum beatissimo Agapito papa urbis Romae ut . . . collatis expensis in Urbe romana professos doctores scholae potius acciperent christianae. Institutiones*, preface; *PL*, LXX, 1105 f.

circumstances hindered the execution of his plan, he wished at least to carry out the idea to some extent by the organization of the studies in his monastery at Vivarium. The program is outlined in his famous work, *Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum*, a veritable *Introduction* to the study of the sacred and profane sciences. In the schools of the Middle Ages it became the guide of higher studies.

One of his most original innovations, particularly adapted to the needs of that time, was the training of writers especially occupied in copying ancient books. They formed a separate category in that sort of monastic academy. From Cassiodorus they received their regulations and their technical method. He considered this the noblest and most useful of all manual labors, and looked upon it as something sacred. He says: "Satan receives a blow every time the writer transcribes one of the Lord's words."⁶

Boethius

Of lesser genius, but more illustrious through misfortune, was another high official of Theodoric's government, Boethius. His book, *Consolations of Philosophy*, was the comforter of many a scholar and many a saint in the Middle Ages. Alfred the Great translated it into Anglo-Saxon, and St. Thomas Aquinas wrote a commentary upon this lofty and melancholy testament of a scholar who, reserving the thoughts of the faith for the intimacy of heart to heart converse with God,⁷ sought, before men, to find simply in his conscience as man, the strength to remain firm and calm in the presence of death. Dante who, like all his literary contemporaries, was nourished with the *Consolations of Philosophy*, sees among the loftiest

⁶ *Tot vulnera Satanas accipit, quot antiquarius Domini verba describit. Institutiones*, chap. 30; *PL*, LXX, 1145.

⁷ Since Usener's publication (in 1877) of a fragment of Cassiodorus' work which explicitly refers to Boethius' theological writings, the latter's sound Christianity can no longer be questioned. Cf. Bardenhewer, *Les pères de l'Église*, III, 161.

representatives of human thought, between St. Ambrose and Venerable Bede, a globe of pure light,

“By seeing every good therein exults
The sainted soul, which the fallacious world
Makes manifest to him who listeneth well ;
The body whence ’twas hunted forth is lying
Down in Cieldauro, and from martyrdom
And banishment it came unto this peace.” ⁸

The poet is here alluding to the tragic end of Boethius, who was shamefully put to death by Theodoric. A mere incident was enough to awaken and release the most cruel instincts in that barbarian soul. Emperor Justin, by one of those excessive measures which the civil power usually employs when it interferes in religious questions without authorization, had deprived his Arian subjects of their churches and the exercise of their civil rights. Theodoric was angered by such a measure against his coreligionists and perhaps was disturbed at seeing many of his own subjects becoming Catholics. He thereupon suddenly became a persecutor. The reprisals he employed were terrible.

He ordered Pope John I to go to Constantinople and there obtain from Justin the withdrawal of his edict and the return of the recently converted Arians to Arianism. The holy Pontiff did not refuse to be a messenger of peace and conciliation. It was the first time a pope had entered Constantinople. He was received with unparalleled magnificence, and without difficulty obtained the restoration of the Arian churches to their owners and the restoration of civil rights to the Arians. But the Pontiff could not think of asking that the recent converts return to their heresy.⁹

Theodoric, enraged at the partial failure of this mission and piqued at the honor shown to the Pope by the Eastern Em-

⁸ Dante, *Paradiso*, canto 10, verses 124-129, Longfellow's translation.

⁹ *Lib. pont.*, I, 277 note 5.

peror, became exasperated. In an outburst of rage he ordered the execution of Boethius and the aged Senator Symmachus, Boethius' father-in-law, whom he accused of treason. He watched for Pope John's return, arrested him at Ravenna, and cast him into prison. The Pontiff, worn out by mental and physical torture, soon breathed his last in his dungeon, a martyr to duty. On his tomb, where miraculous cures presently bore witness to his holiness, the Christians engraved these lines: "Pontiff of the Lord, you fall the victim of Christ; thus have the popes been pleasing to almighty God."¹⁰

The holy Pontiff died May 18, 526. Theodoric exerted all his power to bring about the election of a candidate of his own choosing, Felix by name,¹¹ and published an edict of persecution. But the King died (August 30, 526) without having time to carry out his decree.

During the last years of his life, Theodoric alienated the two great powers with which he should have reckoned: the Catholic Church by the persecution of Pope John, the Roman party by the execution of Boethius and Symmachus. In the might of the Ostrogoths the people of Italy saw merely a heretical and barbarian power. But its days were numbered. It ended with Teja in 553, having lasted sixty years (493-553).

The Lombards in Italy

The question now was, who would take the place of the fallen kingdom. In 555 it seemed for a while that it might be the emperor. The Byzantine general Narses, after a battle in

¹⁰ *Antistes Domini procumbis victima Christi;
Pontifices summo sic placuere Deo.*

This epitaph was discovered and published by De Rossi, *Inscript. christ.*, II, 57.

¹¹ In the first edition of the *Liber pontificalis*, the reading preferred by Mommsen is: *ordinatus est in jussu Theodorici regis* (*Lib. pont.*, Mommsen's ed., I, 138). See a further testimony to the same effect in Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, I, 280 note 5. The election of St. Felix was canonically confirmed afterward by general consent. St. Felix closes the series, unbroken thus far, of the canonized popes.

which he defeated the Ostrogoths, declared Italy a province of the Eastern Empire. But the Empire was not in condition to exercise effective sway over Italy. Thirteen years later (568) a sturdier barbarian race, whose assistance Narses had asked for his expedition and who had developed a thirst for conquest on their own account, the longobardi ("men with long beards"), or Lombards, under the leadership of their King Alboin, took possession of a greater portion of the Italian peninsula. Of the Ostrogothic kingdom, which Theodoric thought would be the successor of the Roman Empire, scarcely anything remained except the Catholic works so intelligently fostered by the great minister Cassiodorus, the collections and reforms of Dionysius Exiguus, the monks of St. Benedict, and the writings of Boethius.

The Lombard invasion was most terrifying. Those barbarians pillaged and slew everything along their way. St. Gregory the Great, writing twenty-five years after Alboin's entrance into Italy, speaks of them as follows:

The barbarous and cruel nation of the Lombards, drawn as a sword out of a sheath, left their own country and invaded ours; by reason whereof the people, which before the huge multitude were like to thick cornfields, remain now withered and overthrown: for cities be wasted, towns and villages spoiled, churches burnt, monasteries of men and women destroyed, farms left desolate, and the country remaineth solitary and void of men to till the ground, and destitute of all its inhabitants.¹²

The very appearance of these men, "with long beards falling on their vigorous breasts," as Paul the Deacon says,¹³ was frightening.

They shaved the neck and left it bare up to the back of the head, having their hair hanging down on the face as far as the mouth and parting it

¹² *Dial.*, Bk. III, chap. 38.

¹³ "Long was the beard that grew down on his vigorous breast." Paul the Deacon, *History of the Langobards*, Bk. III, chap. 19.

on either side by a part in the forehead. Their garments were loose and mostly linen, such as the Anglo-Saxons are wont to wear, ornamented with broad borders woven in various colors.¹⁴

Abominably idolatrous,¹⁵ they were worshipers of Odin, offered sacrifice to the god of goats, and had a superstitious cult of snakes.¹⁶ According to St. Gregory the Great, it was at the time of this invasion that Redemptus bishop of Ferentino north of Rome, while making a visitation of his parishes, was overtaken by nightfall near the tomb of the martyr Eutychius. He there awaited the coming of daylight. About midnight the saint appeared to him and said: "Art thou awake?" When Redemptus answered, the saint continued: "The end of all flesh is come."¹⁷ The people of Italy, panic-stricken, fled: some sought refuge in the lagoons of Venetia, others on the islands along the coast, others on the seashore ready for flight. Inland the people crowded into a few fortified cities, in Rome, and in Naples.¹⁸

Once established in the land, the Lombards, who chose a king only in time of war, resumed their republican form of government.¹⁹ In each tribe an elected chieftain administered justice. It was not till later that the Lombards had a dynasty of kings. In 585, when they had to repel an attack of the imperial forces, they elected Autaris. The latter's marriage to Theodelinda, a Catholic Bavarian princess, had a great influence upon the destinies of the Lombard people. To Queen Theodelinda the Church owes the erection of numerous churches, among others that of St. John the Baptist at Monza, where the iron

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Bk. IV, chap. 22.

¹⁵ Jaffé, no. 1048; St. Gregory, *Dial.*, II, 17; *Regist.*, II, 4.

¹⁶ The worship of serpents continued at Benevento. See the hymn to St. Barbatus; Borgia, *Memorie storiche di Benevento*, II, 277.

¹⁷ *Dial.*, Bk. III, chap. 38.

¹⁸ The account of this invasion forms the second book of the work of Paul the Deacon, *De gestis Longobardorum*; *PL*, Vol. XCV.

¹⁹ Paul the Deacon, II, 27-32; *PL*, XCV, 498-502.

crown of the Lombard kings was later deposited. To her also is due the founding of the celebrated Bobbio monastery, where St. Columban ended his days, and perhaps the conversion of her second husband, King Agilulf.²⁰ The accession of her nephew Aribert in 653 placed in power a Catholic branch, that put an end to Arianism and established the unity of the faith in Italy.²¹ The Lombard kingdom, however, was destined to disappear. The aversion of the people of Italy to the Lombards because of their outward appearance, the weaknesses of the Lombards' political constitution, too favorable to the formation of independent duchies and thereby too much opposed to national unity, above all the ambition of their princes who, in their desire to seize the city of Rome, alienated the papacy and drove it to seek support from the Frankish princes: such were the various causes that brought the Lombard rule to an end. It lasted two centuries (568–774).

But this domination, like that of the Ostrogoths, left a deep trace in history. Monastic institutions such as the erection of the Bobbio monastery and the restoration of the Abbey of Monte Cassino, juridical monuments like the royal Edict of Rotharis, a political and social evolution like that which the Lombards' sojourn in Italy determined, deserve our attention.²²

²⁰ The contemporary documents are contradictory. The *Epistola Columbani*, no. 5 (*PL*, LXXX, 259 ff.) supposes that the king was a Catholic. A letter of Sisebut king of the Visigoths seems to indicate that he was Arian. *Epist. Visigoth.*, no. 9.

²¹ Outside of Arianism, this unity of the faith had been broken in Italy by the schism of Aquileia. After the theological disturbances in which Pope Vigilius was compromised, the metropolitan of Aquileia withdrew from communion with Rome. Theodelinda, incorrectly informed, was for a while seduced by the schism. St. Gregory had no difficulty in detaching her from the schism. Cf. *MGH, Reg. Gregor.*, IV, 4, 38. The schism of Aquileia did not end until 628, under Pope Honorius. Cf. Jaffé, no. 2016; *Lib. pont.*, I, 325, 381.

²² The Life of St. Columban by Jonas of Suza, who was a Bobbio monk, in 618; *PL*, LXXXVII, 1011–1046. There is a critical edition by Krusch in *MGH, Script. rerum merovingicarum*, IV, 108 ff. Cf. E. Martin, *Saint Colomban*.

The Bobbio Monastery

In 612 St. Columban, exiled from his abbey at Luxeuil on account of the lofty freedom of his speech, then taken from the shore of Lake Constance in consequence of the excessive zeal of one of his monks, arrived in Italy and received a most hearty welcome from the great Queen Theodelinda. In the Trebie valley the Bobbio estate was given to him that he might build a monastery there. The fame for holiness that clung to the steps of the famous Irish monk, the report of his influence with the aged Queen Brunehilde and of his courageous invectives against King Thierry, the strict discipline of his monastic colony, which had followed him from Ireland to Burgundy, from Burgundy to Austrasia, from Austrasia to Italy, a colony in which he appeared as a clan chieftain rather than as the father of a family of monks, all this gave Columban the features of a prophet, like the seers of Israel.

Of all the Gothic peoples, the Lombards were the most imbued with the Germanic spirit. Among them, the coming of the Anglo-Saxon apostle, who seemed to incarnate the national pride and wild daring of the northern races, soon bore fruit. The Bobbio monastery presently became a center of active strife against the last champions of Arianism. Columban settled down there and, until his death in 615, there maintained in its full rigor that famous Rule, derived largely from the monks of Bangor. Seeming to take no account of human weakness, it punished infractions by fasts, imprisonment, and scourging, gave superiors the exercise of authority without appeal, supposed in all members—abbots, priors, and simple monks—unbounded self-denial and loyalty, bodies of iron and souls of heroes.²³

But with Columban dead, his Rule appeared hard. At the beginning of the ninth century, when the Lombards were min-

²³ See the Rule of St. Columban in *PL*, LXXX, 209–224. Cf. Malnory's doctorate thesis, *Quid luxovienses monachi ad regulam monasteriorum contulerint*.

gled with the population of Italy, it became inapplicable. All the monasteries founded under the influence of Luxeuil and Bobbio adopted most of the Benedictine Rule. In 817 the Council of Aachen ordered the adoption of the Rule of St. Benedict in all the monasteries of the Carolingian Empire. Finally Luxeuil and Bobbio also adopted it.

The Rule of St. Columban had fulfilled its providential mission. As the amazing life of the fathers of the desert had done in the midst of the Graeco-Roman world, as at a later date the sublime folly of St. Francis of Assisi's poverty would do in the very height of feudalism, so the austere Rule of St. Columban had shown, in the heart of the barbarian world, so selfish and jealous of personal rights, how far the enthusiasm of heroism could go in obedience and self-denial. Even those who were unable to endure that strict discipline, with jealous care kept the sacred relics of the great monk, his chalice and his staff of thorny palm. These are still venerated in the St. Columban Church at Bobbio. With favors heaped upon it by the kings of France and the emperors of Germany, the Bobbio Abbey in the Middle Ages became one of the most important centers of intellectual life. The Bobbio manuscripts have been the basis of many literary and historical discoveries of modern times.²⁴

To St. Columban and his Rule has been attributed a still more important influence upon ecclesiastical institutions. It has been said that to him the Church owes the introduction of private penance and private confession. According to this view, they are merely the extension of a monastic practice, the accusation of faults which monks make to their abbot. It is said that the influence of the celebrated Irish monk introduced this custom among the laity, and it then became a universal ecclesiastical institution.²⁵ Says Duchesne: "This thesis is re-

²⁴ Tiraboschi, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, III, 376.

²⁵ Lorning, *Geschichte des deutschen Kirchenrechts*, Vol. II.

futed by the following considerations: first, it does not take into account the practice of private penance among the Greeks and other Easterners, who were not affected by Irish and Anglo-Saxon influences; the same may be said of Rome, southern Italy, and Spain; secondly, it cannot be admitted that the bishops of the Frankish countries, who were generally not favorably inclined to St. Columban and his monks, let the latter impose so serious a disciplinary change upon them.”²⁶ It seems more likely that St. Columban and his monks became apostles of private confession, which was little in use about them, and that, to facilitate the use of it, they replaced penance with imposition of hands, and public reconciliation with private penance, as practiced in the monasteries.²⁷

Restoration of Monte Cassino

While the Benedictine Rule was spreading through all the countries of Europe, the cradle of the Benedictine family at Monte Cassino, ruined by the invasions, remained deserted. The venerated remains of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica had been removed from there in 679.²⁸ In 716 a wealthy resident of Brescia, one Petronax, aided by some Roman monks, undertook, with the encouragement of Pope Gregory II and the backing of the Lombard Duke Gisulf of Benevento, to raise the Abbey of Monte Cassino from its ruins. God blessed the pious enterprise. Petronax died abbot of the monastery. In 748 Pope St. Zachary consecrated the new church, exempted the monastery from any episcopal jurisdiction, and deposited there the original text of the Rule of St. Benedict.

²⁶ *Bulletin critique*, 1883, pp. 366 f.

²⁷ E. Martin, *Saint Colomban*; art “Colomban” in *Dict. de théol.*, III, 374.

²⁸ The incident is related by Paul the Deacon, *Hist. Long.*, VI, 2. Was St. Benedict’s body brought to the monastery of Fleury (Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire)? Is it now there or at Monte Cassino? This question is a matter of controversy between the Benedictines of Italy and the Benedictines of France. See Mabillon, *Dissertatio in translatione S. Benedicti*; *Acta sanctorum O.S.B.*, II, 337; Chamard, *Les reliques de S. Benoît*; Cuissant, “De reliquiis S. Benedicti” in the *Benedict. Studien*, 1884.

The glorious destinies of the famous abbey are well known. The Lombard King Ratchis and Carloman the brother of Pepin sought retirement in its cloister. There, too, toward the close of the eighth century, the monk Paul Warnefridus, better known as Paul the Deacon, wrote his *Historia Longobardorum*, which "enjoyed extraordinary and, by and large, well-deserved favor in the Middle Ages."²⁹ No other people has found in its national historian so faithful an echo of its life, so understanding an interpreter of its feelings.³⁰

These traces of the Lombard domination are to be found also in the original style of the churches of that period. "The Lombard style is a heavy modification of the Byzantine style. It should have a place in the history of art."³¹

The Royal Edict of Rotharis

The Lombard people survived also in their legislation. The *Royal Edict* of Rotharis, promulgated in national assembly during the year 683, contains 388 articles;³² it is different from the other barbarian laws in three remarkable particulars. It surpasses them all in the extent and complexity of its provisions. It embraces not only public and criminal law, but also private law which, in the Edict of Theodoric, scarcely existed, each person being judged according to the laws of his own locality. No law of that period is marked by so fundamentally Germanic a character.³³ The national law of the Lombards has survived most other national legislations. Amplified and

²⁹ Molinier, *Les sources de l'histoire de France*, I, 82.

³⁰ Kurth, *Histoire poétique des Mérovingiens*, p. 37.

³¹ Molinier, *Histoire du Moyen Age*, p. 308. On Lombard architecture, see Rivoira, *Le origini della architettura lombarda*.

³² Pertile, *Storia del diritto italiano*, I, 131 note 10; *MGH, Leges*, Vol. IV.

³³ But we should not exaggerate this trait. Traces of Roman law have been noted in the Edict of Rotharis. See Del Giudice, "Le tracce del diritto romano nell' editto Longobardo" in *Reale Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere, Rendiconti*, 1886, pp. 513 ff.

amended by Rotharis' successors and by the Carolingian rulers, it continued far into the Middle Ages. Thanks to its wonderful adaptation to the people for whom it was made, for a long time it kept its own character alongside the Roman and the canonical legislation. Interpreted by jurists, in Italy it maintained a juridical activity,³⁴ which procured for the Italian schools, at the time of the renaissance of Roman law, a distinguished rank among the other schools of Italy. This, so it seems, was its chief rôle, for the Roman law, as promulgated by Emperor Justinian, never ceased to exercise a preponderant influence in Italy. Ecclesiastics followed it and appealed to it as their law, subsidiary to the canonical regulations. In 887 Leo IV, writing to Emperor Lothaire I, felicitated him on the fact that the Roman law until then had "remained unharmed by the universal tempests" and asked that it might continue "to be maintained in its strength and vigor."³⁵

Thus little by little, at the same time that the various races were intermingling, the strongest institutions and the most autonomous legal systems were being founded among the Gothic races, in the unity of the Church and of the Roman traditions.

A more lasting and far more serious result of the Lombard domination was the profound change it made in the political geography of Italy and in its social conditions. Thenceforth the Italian peninsula was made up of two regions: Lombard Italy occupying the north and central portions, and Byzantine Italy embracing the coast and a few cities of the central portion, the chief city being Rome. Moreover, in Lombard Italy

³⁴ In the tenth century, when law studies seem to have been everywhere abandoned, the Lombard law was still studied. The monks of La Cava monastery, near Salerno, published (1871) a tenth century manuscript containing the Lombard laws. *MGH, codex diplom. cavensis*. It will be found in the *Leges*, IV, 31. Pertile, *Storia del diritto italiano*, I, 133-139.

³⁵ *Vestram flagitamus clementiam, ut, sicut romana lex viguit absque universis procellis, ita nunc suum robur propriumque vigorem obtineat. Corp. jur. can., Decret. Part I, dist. 10, chap. 13. Leo IV Lothario Augusto.*

as in Byzantine Italy the need of defense against the barbarians and against the ambitious scheming of imperial officials gave birth to a new feudalism, powerful and restless.

Nowhere more than at Rome, a Byzantine enclave in the midst of Lombard Italy, were the difficulties inherent in this situation more keenly felt: a radical powerlessness of the imperial authority to maintain order, incessant rivalries of the seignorial families, perpetual conflict between the military aristocracy and the ecclesiastical aristocracy. Rome continued to suffer for a long time from this internal unrest. The powerful sword of Charlemagne ended it for a while, but the disturbances sprang up again with extreme violence in the tenth century under the baneful influence of the house of Theophylactus, and in the fourteenth century through the agitation of tribunes like Rienzi. To free Rome entirely from these disturbances there was need of the establishment of a very solid and powerful temporal power. The popes and the Christian princes would provide it.

When the arms of the kings of France overthrew the power of the Lombards, the brilliant and ephemeral Burgundian and Visigoth kingdoms had long since disappeared from the soil of Gaul, but they, too, survived through their great men and their jurisprudence.

The Visigoths

The Visigoths and the Burgundians, Gothic in race and Arian in religion like the Heruli, the Ostrogoths, and the Lombards, were different in this particular, that they did not introduce themselves by force into the regions they would occupy; they were invited there by the imperial power itself.³⁶

³⁶ Before they were appealed to by the emperors, the Visigoths had already penetrated into Gaul. According to Fustel de Coulanges, this penetration was peaceful and almost unobserved. *Histoire des Instit.*, I, 347-351. Julien Havet thinks it had a warlike and conquering character. *Rev. hist.*, IV, Part I, pp. 88 ff.

At the beginning of the fifth century the people of Rome at least three different times (406, 408, and 409) saw a throng of pillaging barbarians pass by. Tall men they were, *septipedes* (seven-foot men), as Sidonius Apollinaris called them, men who filled the Romans with terror. They were the Visigoths, led by their King Alaric I. It seems established that they had been called into Italy, first by Stilicho, the chief minister of Emperor Honorius of the West, to fight Arcadius: then by Rufinus, chief minister of Emperor Arcadius of the East, to defend him against the forces of Honorius. These barbarians, who were being paid by both sides, then thought of taking for themselves that empire over which the two brothers were at strife.

In 414, Alaric's successor, Ataulfus, clothed with the insignia of *magister militum*, seems to have had the idea of making his residence at Rome. But the Emperor gave him a new commission: to fight, in the name of the Empire, the barbarians who were threatening the Roman provinces of Gaul and Spain. He went thither, drove out the barbarians, and established himself strongly on his own account between the Rhone, the Garonne, and the Pyrenees. His capital was Toulouse. The Visigoths were a people perpetually restless. Until the time when Clovis drove them back beyond the Pyrenees, they continued to be a cause of disturbance in southern Gaul. The emperors made use of their restless disposition, employing them to fight the Huns and Vandals or to put down revolts in the Empire.

Euric King of the Visigoths

The greatest of the Visigoth kings was Euric. In his reign the kingdom of the Visigoths, extending into Gaul and Spain, reached the height of its power. "Euric might have assured

the Visigoths the domination of Gaul if he had won the Church to his cause."³⁷

But Euric was a persecutor of the Church. After reaching the throne by fratricide, he governed with intelligence and consistency in his ideas, but he dishonored himself by disloyalty, treason, and murder. Says St. Gregory of Tours:

Euric, king of the Goths, began a grievous persecution of the Christians in Gaul. Everywhere he beheaded those who would not conform to his perverse doctrine; he cast priests into prison. . . . The doors of the holy churches he ordered to be blocked with briers, that only a few might enter and the faith might pass into oblivion. It was chiefly the cities of Novempopulana and Aquitania that were wasted by this storm. There is today extant a letter on this subject written by the noble Sidonius to Bishop Basilus, in which these facts are recorded.³⁸

In the letter which Gregory of Tours mentions, Sidonius Apollinaris says that Euric might be taken for the head of a religious sect rather than the ruler of a nation.³⁹ Euric, observing the ineffectiveness of his bloody measures of persecution, thought of a more insidious plan, the disorganization and gradual extinction of the clergy. He forbade vacant sees to be filled and further hindered the ordaining of additional priests. Public worship had to be discontinued in many places. Euric died in 484. His son Alaric II and his successors did not carry out his tyrannical measures. But the kingdom was in the hands of the Arians, emboldened by the favor which the previous reign had granted them. Here and there, in the cities, a handful of heretics might be seen oppressing the Catholics. It was an era of local persecutions. In the life of St. Caesarius it is related that, on pretext of hunting boars, the Visigoth

³⁷ Cf. Bayet in Lavissee, *Hist. de France*, II, Part I, p. 83.

³⁸ St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, Bk. II, chap. 25, p. 64.

³⁹ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.*, VII, 6; *PL*, LVIII, 570 f.

Arians ravaged the monastery lands, lodged in the houses of the monastery peasants and used them in their hunting expeditions, and were the cause of great disturbance in the monastic communities. The Bishop of Arles, in the presence of the ill-will of the government, vainly tried to be protected by the Romans. He then turned to God in prayer. The boars disappeared from the monastic lands as if by miracle.⁴⁰ There followed a comparative calm, for which the saint praised God.

The persecution by the populace sometimes assumed a political character. After the conversion of the Franks, the Catholics were accused of making a pact with them. St. Gregory of Tours gives an account of the uprising that nearly cost the life of Quintianus bishop of Rodez.⁴¹ Caesarius himself, the great bishop who, in the city of Arles, was regarded with general veneration, did not escape their suspicion. He was a Burgundian by birth. They charged him with treason in favor of his former kings: Caesarius, they said, wanted to turn the city of Arles over to the Burgundians. He was removed from his see and exiled to Bordeaux.⁴²

In a way these persecutions served the cause of the Church. The people of southern Gaul, indolent and vivacious, fond of idleness and of noisy pleasures, adapted themselves too easily to the coming of the new rulers. But they rose up at the outrage. Then it was observed that their carefree manner was only superficial. As Kurth remarks, "their faith became precious to them when they saw it oppressed, and the most indifferent persons among them felt a certain political ardor for it. And the Aquitanians clung to their bishops. The war upon the episcopate awoke the proudest and most generous impulses of their souls."⁴³ The Visigoths, defeated at Vouillé by the troops of Clovis, departed amid general execration.

⁴⁰ *Vita S. Caesarii*, I, 36; *PL*, LVII, 1019.

⁴¹ St. Gregory of Tours, *ibid.*, p. 75.

⁴² *Vita S. Caesarii*, I, 16; *PL*, LXVII, 1008 f.

⁴³ Kurth, *Clovis*, p. 403.

The *Lex Visigothorum*

It cannot be denied that Euric and even Alaric possessed a real political sense which, except when sectarian passion misled them, brought about results that were useful to general civilization. Such was the code of laws known as the *Lex Visigothorum* or *Breviarium Alaricianum*. It is impossible to know exactly what part of this Code goes back to Euric, because it was modified by Leovigild and Recared, the Visigoth kings of Spain. Some historians have thought they could distinguish the part due to Euric.⁴⁴ What is certain is that the *Lex Visigothorum* is "the mildest of the barbarian laws."⁴⁵ In it we find no trace of legal dueling. We may suppose that the influence of religion was felt in the laws even of Euric. At that period "only one really strong power existed in Gaul, the power of the episcopate."⁴⁶ When, in any state, the Church constitutes a real social force, a statesman like Euric reckons with it: when the Christian spirit pervades the surrounding atmosphere, even the persecutors are penetrated by it.

St. Caesarius of Arles

But in southern Gaul the Christian spirit already had a powerful center, thanks to the great bishop who has quite justly been called the preceptor of the Frankish Church,⁴⁷ St. Caesarius of Arles. He was one of those men who gave the Merovingian Church doctrine, exhortation, discipline, and culture.⁴⁸ We do not mean that the Bishop of Arles was a theologian of great capacity. His doctrine was that of his master, St. Augustine. He held to it with scrupulous, almost obstinate,

⁴⁴ Esmein, *Histoire du droit français*, p. 98. Blumme in *MGH, Leges*, Vol. III.

⁴⁵ Gautier, *Histoire du droit français*, p. 109.

⁴⁶ Lavissee, *Hist. de France*, II, Part I, p. 92.

⁴⁷ Paul Lejay, "Le rôle théologique de Césaire d'Arles" in the *Rev. d'hist. et de litt. rel.*, X (1905), 616.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

fidelity. Frequently he condensed it in clear maxims, short and didactically arranged. But he moderated the rigor of the expressions by an unusual sense of the practical life. St. Caesarius was a catechist. The title that perhaps most becomes him is that of catechist of the Church of the Merovingian period. He possessed also the feeling of real life. Several of his writings have the tenor of a symbol of faith. Dom Morin attributes to Caesarius the authorship of the so-called Athanasian Creed.⁴⁹ He might thus be considered the catechist of the universal Church. His sermons, written down by tachygraphers as they were delivered, were preached throughout the whole Frankish Church and even beyond.⁵⁰ On the great questions of predestination, the Trinity, and the incarnation, the Bishop of Arles enunciated his doctrine at the six councils over which he presided or which he inspired: Agde (506), Arles (524), Carpentras (527), Orange (529), Vaison (529), and Marseilles (523).

But in his sermons he dealt with the most ordinary questions of daily life. As he lived in the midst of his flock, daily associating with the people he was instructing, his discourses abounded in practical advice based upon exact observations. Thus his oratorical work became a genuine picture of the Christian life of that period. He mentions the reception of holy communion at the approach of the great feasts.⁵¹ He threatens to refuse the blessing of a marriage by way of ecclesiastical penalty,⁵² proof that at that time the nuptial blessing was regarded as independent of the validity. He gives us

⁴⁹ Germain Morin, "Le symbole d'Athanase et son premier témoin, saint Césaire d'Arles" in the *Revue bénédictine*, XVIII (1901), 337-363.

⁵⁰ St. Caesarius had no hesitation in taking an entire sermon from some confrère. At that period there was evidently no idea of what we call literary ownership. Lejay, *R.H.L.R.*, X, 611; *Revue bénédictine*, XVI, 342.

⁵¹ *PL*, XXXIX, 1974 f. Migne inserts the sermons of St. Caesarius in the appendix to the sermons of St. Augustine.

⁵² *PL*, XXXIX, 2291.

one of the earliest authentic references to the sacrament of extreme unction.⁵³ These sermons contain definite precepts about almsgiving, fixed at not less than a tenth of one's income.⁵⁴ And we there find one of the earliest enumerations of the works of mercy, which are spoken of as capable of wiping out small sins (*peccata minuta*).⁵⁵ Caesarius saw about him the practice of private penance and he recommended the use of it.⁵⁶ His doctrine on purgatory possesses an exactness that is hardly to be found in writings before his day.⁵⁷ All these teachings and counsels are given with a kindliness and a condescension for human weakness, a carefulness of detail, a tone of sly sagacity, and a Burgundian good nature, that make this Gallo-Roman, born in the district of Chalon-sur-Saône, one of the most engaging figures of the Merovingian period.⁵⁸

There has been some scholarly discussion as to whether the Christian life found expression in southern Gaul at that period in a special architecture, in a sort of "pre-Romanesque" art, which developed into Gothic art.⁵⁹ Such a theory has not been satisfactorily proved. Probably the art of the Middle Ages was called "Gothic" simply because the word was synonymous with "barbarian";⁶⁰ and it is also probable that the Visigoths had but an insignificant part in the evolution of religious architecture.

⁵³ *PL*, XXXIX, 2238 f. Cf. Boudinhon, *Revue catholique des Églises*, II (1905), 403.

⁵⁴ *PL*, XXXIX, 2268.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1948, 2219. The sacramental number seven occurs only later. Poncelet in *Analecta bollandiana*, XXII (1903), 187.

⁵⁶ *PL*, XXXIX, 2227.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, col. 2212.

⁵⁸ St. Caesarius was born in 470 or 471, and died in 543. Malnory, *Saint Césaire, évêque d'Arles*.

⁵⁹ This view is maintained by Courajod in his lectures at the *École du Louvre*, 1899, Vol. I. Brutails (*L'archéologie du Moyen Age et ses méthodes*) opposes Courajod's opinion. Cf. Leclercq, *Manuel d'archéologie chrétienne*, II, 128.

⁶⁰ Rabelais was one of the first to give the word "Gothic" the disparaging implication which it has long retained. Lemonnier, in Lavis, *Hist. de France*, V, 312.

The Burgundians

Of all the men of Gothic race, the least barbarous, the most easily assimilated to the Roman civilization, were the Burgundians. In the fourth century, according to Ammianus Marcellinus, they boasted that they were sprung from the same stock as the Romans, *sobolen se esse romanam Burgundi sciunt*. The emperors had a large number of them in their pay, stationing them along the Rhine to protect Trier, and placing them in the Alps as a safeguard for Provence. But these barbarians, building fortresses, or "burgs," at various intervals, came to be called, says Paulus Orosius, "Burgundians," or "men of the burgs."⁶¹

The history of the events which led them to occupy south-eastern Gaul is obscure. Probably they came at the request of the Gallo-Romans and settled there permanently. "So far as we can ascertain, the Burgundian kingdom was bounded on the side of the Franks by the Langres plateau; on the side of the Alamanni by the Belfort gap, the Aar, and the northern Jura; on the side of the Ostrogoths by the Alps; on the west by part of the lower course of the Rhone, the upper course of the Loire, the Morvan mountains, and the Côte d' Or; on the south the Durance separated them from Gothic Provence, but the Burgundians repeatedly crossed that boundary."⁶²

⁶¹ Orosius, *Hist.*, Bk. VII, chap. 32; *PL*, XXXI, 1144. Thus the Christians of Asturia who, as they recovered foot by foot the ground invaded by the Mussulmans, built fortresses to secure their conquests, and received the name of Castilians. Thus the warlike race charged with defending the borders of Germany won the name Habsburg.

⁶² Lavisse, *Hist. de France*, II, Part I, p. 87. Some historians, such as Pitra, following St. Gregory of Tours, state that the Burgundians seized Provence. But this is not correct. At the Council of Agde (506) there were present the bishops of Aix, Arles, Digne, and Fréjus. Agde certainly was subject to the Visigoths and, since it was at that time unheard of that bishops should go outside of their kingdom to take part in a council, there is no doubt that Aix, Arles, Digne, and Fréjus were in Visigoth country, not Burgundian. The holding of councils thus gives us reliable geographic indications.

Their conversion to the Catholic faith must date from the time of their sojourn near Trier, where they were in contact with the first missionaries of Germany.⁶³ Their Arianism came to them from their dealings with the Visigoths. It affected especially the upper classes of society. But in Burgundy there was always a notable part of the population strongly attached to the Catholic faith. It was the Burgundian Clotilda who converted the King of the Franks at the close of the fifth century; a hundred years later Queen Bertha's chaplain, Bishop Luidhard, who contributed to the conversion of King Ethelbert of England, was a Burgundian. We know that St. Caesarius was a native Burgundian. King Guntram of Burgundy is honored with the title of saint.⁶⁴ It was through fear of his subjects, says St. Gregory of Tours, that King Gondebad did not abjure Arianism.⁶⁵ His son Sigismund was converted by St. Avitus, but, being a weak character, he let himself be guided by the Roman Avitus, and Clodomir the Frankish king had him and his family put to death in 524. The kingdom of the Burgundians was thenceforth doomed. Sigismund's brother Gondemar vainly tried to rescue his country's cause by force of arms. He was defeated in 534 by the Frankish kings Clotaire and Childebart. That was the end of Burgundy. The kingdom had lasted scarcely more than a century, from 413 to 534.

It is not, therefore, by the duration of its national life or the glory of its arms that this race acquired a fame in history. Rather it is by the brilliancy of its intellectual life. A race that gave the sixth and the seventh centuries their best historians, that possessed the most celebrated schools of rhetoric in Gaul,

⁶³ Orosius in 417 said: *Providentia Dei omnes (Burgundii) modo facti catholica fide*. PL, XXXI, 1144.

⁶⁴ On this King Guntram, see St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, Bk. IX, chaps. 20, 21, pp. 389 ff.

⁶⁵ St. Gregory of Tours, *ibid.*, Bk. II, chap. 34, pp. 72 f. We know that the so-called conference organized at Lyons by Gondebad between Catholics and Arians is spurious. It was made up by Jerome Vignier. Havet, *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, XLVI (1885), 233-250.

that inspired and probably outlined the epic poem of the Niebelungen, that was able to grasp the lofty thoughts of a St. Avitus and that expressed its life and morals in the Gombetta Law, was a valuable contribution to Christianity.

Born in the region of Autun about 530, the chronicler Marius of Avenches "kept himself informed regarding the minor events of Greek politics, questioning pilgrims and traveling merchants," and has left us "a concise, dry work, but one of considerable value."⁶⁶ To Burgundy belonged also the three authors of the so-called *Chronicle of Fredegarius*, composed between 584 and 642. It is written in unusually barbarous Latin but contains "almost as many useful items of information as it has words."⁶⁷

Burgundy had its schools of rhetoricians. The most famous was that which Viventiolus conducted at Lyons. The school at Valence, directed by Sabaudus, was highly praised by Sidonius Apollinaris. There it was that St. Avitus probably received his training in eloquence.

The pseudo-Fredegarius declares that he wrote his memoirs *ab illustro viro Niebelungo*.⁶⁸ This is the name that would give its title to the German epic of the twelfth century. The Neibelungen, an epic account of the deeds of Burgundy, was composed upon the basis of popular songs which probably go back to the period immediately following the ruin of the Burgundian kingdom.

St. Avitus

But the great poet of the kingdom was the bishop of Vienne, St. Avitus.⁶⁹ Alcimus Ecditius Avitus, born probably at Vienne

⁶⁶ Molinier, *Les sources de l'histoire de France*, I, 170; V, viii.

⁶⁷ *Op. cit.*, I, 63.

⁶⁸ *Histoire de la Gaule*, II, 456; *PL*, LXXII, 683.

⁶⁹ The works of St. Avitus will be found in *PG*, Vol. LIX. A critical edition has been published in *MGH, Scriptores antiquiss.*, Vol. VI. The most scholarly edition is that of Ulysse Chevalier, *Œuvres complètes de S. Avit*.

in 450, died about 520. He was not merely the far-sighted statesman who, in his letters to Clovis, foretold so exactly the future rôle of the Frankish monarchy, the energetic bishop who became the heart and soul of the Council of Epaon, the defender of the Holy See, whose vigorous protest resounded amid the strife of antipope Lawrence against Symmachus. St. Avitus was also an eloquent poet whose remarkable *De spiritalis historiae gestis*, in Guizot's opinion, is a sort of *Paradise Lost*, almost deserving a place beside the great work of Milton.⁷⁰ He is also a worthy theologian, defending the procession of the Holy Ghost *a Patre et Filio*,⁷¹ and affirming the divinity of Christ with so much exactness that Agobard of Lyons appealed to his doctrinal explanation in opposing the adoptionism of Felix of Urgel.⁷² He is likewise an enlightened canonist, bewailing the abusive interference of seculars in the election of bishops,⁷³ protesting against the clergy being dependent upon lay justice,⁷⁴ and striving for the abolition of ordeals.⁷⁵

Burgundian Law

The life of a people is revealed by its great men; and it is manifested also by its juridical institutions. The historian

⁷⁰ Guizot, *Histoire de la civilisation en France*, lesson 18, Vol. II, p. 68 ff. (2d ed.). After quoting St. Avitus' and Milton's description of Eden, Guizot adds: "The description by St. Avitus is superior. The description of the beauties of nature appear to me more varied and more simple."

⁷¹ *PL*, LIX, 386; Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

⁷² *PL*, CIV, 65, 97.

⁷³ *PL*, LIX, 274 f.; Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

⁷⁴ *PL*, LIX, 272; Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 220. The councils had rigorously maintained the electoral right of the clergy and people. Legally all the clerics and all the faithful were electors. But in practice the inhabitants of the cities and the higher clergy directed the electoral operations, and this custom sometimes led to violent protests: the populace then imposed its candidate. These abuses caused the civil power to interfere. Then analogous abuses led the popes to limit the powers of the rulers. Cf. Vacandard, *Études de critique et d'histoire religieuse*, pp. 121-187: "Episcopal elections under the Merovingians."

⁷⁵ *PL*, CIV, 124 f.

Socrates says that the Burgundians were men of prudent mind and good humor.⁷⁶ From Paulus Orosius we learn that their lives were gentle and kindly.⁷⁷ This is the very impression we receive from reading their Code, a masterpiece of common sense and moderation for that period. True, St. Avitus did not succeed in effecting the abolition of legal dueling, and in the ninth century Agobard attacked the remains of barbarism which were sanctioned in the Code.⁷⁸ Nevertheless it is an important document, marking a considerable advance in the progress of civil and criminal law.

The prologue of the Code contains a forceful protest against the venality of the courts. A judge who accepts money gifts in connection with the exercise of his office, is to be punished by death.⁷⁹ A judge guilty of a denial of justice, that is, who refuses to judge, is subject to a fine.⁸⁰ Among the severest penalties are those regarding marital infidelity. In case of adultery, the guilty man and woman are both punished by death.⁸¹ The wife who abandons her husband is to be choked to death in mud.⁸² Most of the other penalties do not possess this terrible character. A free man accused of a crime exonerates himself by declaring his innocence under oath and having twelve other free men swear with him. If his opponent declines to take an oath, the question is settled by duel.⁸³ Those who are without fuel have a right to cut wood in the forests, provided they spare fruit-trees and fir-trees. Certain penalties show that the Burgundians were possessed of truly Gallic

⁷⁶ Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, VII, 30.

⁷⁷ Orosius, VII, 19, 32; *PL*, XXXI, 1144: *Blande, mansuete innocenterque vivant*.

⁷⁸ *PL*, CIV, 125.

⁷⁹ *Lex burg.*, preface. *Hist. des Gaules*, IV, 256; *MGH, Leges*, III, 527.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, *MGH*, III, 527.

⁸¹ *Si adulterantes inventi fuerint, et vir ille occidatur et femina. Lex burg.*, sec. 68; *Hist. des Gaules*, IV, 274; *MGH, Leges*, III, 561.

⁸² *Si qua mulier maritum suum, cui legitime juncta est, dimiserit, necetur in luto. MGH, Leges*, III, 546.

⁸³ *MGH, Leges*, III, 536 f., and sec. 8.

humor, as, for instance, the punishment imposed upon dog-thieves.⁸⁴

The Law of Gondebad or Gombetta Law (*lex gundobada*) soon became very popular. After the Burgundians were merged with the Visigoths, some groups continued to profess the Gombetta Law in legal matters; they were called *Gundobadi*; it was against them that Agobard wrote in the ninth century. Burgundy offers a remarkable example of a people politically abolished that survived in its legislation and its national traditions. At the close of the sixth century and during the seventh century, in the great strife dividing France into Neustria and Austrasia, the Burgundians were the ones who, almost at their pleasure, were able to turn the scales: from the day when they abandoned the party of Brunehilde, that was a lost cause.⁸⁵ Almost three centuries later, when Charlemagne's empire broke up, Burgundy was the first part with enough cohesion to form a kingdom; and for two centuries that kingdom shone with great brilliance.⁸⁶ In the tenth century when Otto I, the restorer of the Empire, married the Burgundian Adelaide, the saintly daughter of King Rudolph astonished the imperial court of Germany by the extent of her knowledge no less than by the eminence of her virtues.

Vandals in Spain

However, south of the Pyrenees, where the arms of Clovis and the popular reprobation of southern Gaul had driven them back, the Visigoths continued to cherish that hope of a great Gothic and Arian kingdom which, in Italy and Gaul, had vainly haunted the ambitions of Theodoric, Autharis,

⁸⁴ *Hist. des Gaules*, IV, 280. *Si quis canem . . . præsumpserit involare, jubemus ut convictus coram omni populo posteriora ipsius osculetur. Lex burgond.*, sec. 10; *MGH, Leges*, III, 572.

⁸⁵ Pitra, *Histoire de saint Léger*, p. 262.

⁸⁶ Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, pp. 509 f.

Euric, and Gondebad. But neither the Visigoths of Spain nor their neighbors the Vandals of Africa would found anything stable; and once again the dream would elude the race that was attainted with the Arian heresy.

This Iberian peninsula, where the Roman influence had been preponderant for a long time past, was the country from which came the philosopher Seneca, the poets Lucan and Martial, the rhetorician Quintilian, and four Roman emperors, Trajan, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius and Theodosius. There the Visigoths at first encountered rivals, the Vandals, and joined hands with the Romans in opposing them. The Vandals, accompanied by the Alani and the Suevi, invaded Spain at the beginning of the fifth century. This race, whose name has become synonymous with devastator, and whose people seemed to possess an exuberant activity, had just crossed Gaul, ravaging it with a fury that no other barbarian hordes ever equaled. But as soon as the Vandals thought they could settle down unmolested on Spanish soil, they abandoned the sword for the plow. In a short time, according to the testimony of a contemporary, Paulus Orosius,⁸⁷ the appearance of the territory occupied by them was transformed. The land was covered with crops, and was peopled with flocks and herds. If we are to accept the accounts of Paulus Orosius and Salvian at face value, a more amazing thing happened; into their laws and morals these barbarians introduced such equity, and especially such respect for their pledged word, that the vanquished people became attached to them and did not regret the loss of the government of the Romans.⁸⁸

Such a people might have become a dread rival for the Visigoths. But an unexpected event removed them from the peninsula. In 422, Boniface, the last count of Africa, appealed to

⁸⁷ Orosius, *Histoire*, chap. 40; *PL*, XXXI, 1165 f.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, chap. 41; *PL*, XXXI, 1168; Leclercq, *L'Afrique chrétienne*, II, 169-171.

the Vandals in his struggle with the Roman forces. The Vandals replied *en masse* and invaded Africa as they had invaded Spain. Contemporary writers—Procopius of Caesarea, Possidius, Victor Vitensis, and St. Augustine—recount the terrible persecution by Genseric. Huneric, Genseric's son, who ascended the throne in 477 after the fall of the Roman Empire, at first granted some liberty to the Catholics, but soon, under the influence of the Arian Bishop Cyrilla, he decreed the severest penalties against them. The chronicler Victor Vitensis, in his archaic and vibrant style, has left us a picture of the countless atrocities amid which the Church of Africa, greatly enfeebled by prosperity and pleasures, recovered the courage of the martyrs of the first centuries. One should read the description of that crowd of martyrs in an infected prison, which the chronicler himself visited. He says: "They had been thrown in there as heaps of grasshoppers are shoveled together, or rather, like grains of precious wheat. They stifled, and when we barely entered the place, we were almost suffocated."⁸⁹

And we have accounts of an exodus of Christians, exiled to the country of the Moors. The Bishop of Vita heard an old woman, who was painfully leading her infant grandson by the hand, urge him to hurry his step. When she saw the Bishop, she said to him: "Bless me, and pray for my grandson. I go into exile with this child, fearful lest the devil might find him alone after my death and would make him leave the right path." Says Victor: "We were unable to hear her words without weeping, and we wished nothing but the accomplishment of God's holy will."⁹⁰ Victor Vitensis also relates the miracle of Tipasa where certain men, whose tongues had been cut out at the root, recovered their speech. And the chronicler adds: "If there is anyone who does not believe my testimony, let him

⁸⁹ Victor Vitensis, *De persecutione vandolica*, II, 10; *PL*, LVIII, 211.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 9; *PL*, LVIII, 210.

go to Constantinople; there he can see a survivor, the sub-deacon Reparatus, who still speaks today quite correctly without the least effort.”⁹¹

Under King Gunthamund there was a period of peace. But King Thrasamund, from 496 to 523, repeated the old cruelties against the Catholics. One hundred and twenty African bishops were exiled to Sardinia. In this number was St. Fulgentius bishop of Ruspe. Fulgentius, sprung from one of the most prominent families, had at first served the Vandal kingdom as an official in some government office. The reading of a page of St. Augustine withdrew him from the world.⁹² As monk, abbot, and bishop, Fulgentius remained faithful to the teaching of St. Augustine. Says Bossuet: “It was for his attachment to St. Augustine and St. Prosper that St. Fulgentius bishop of Ruspe has been so celebrated among the preachers of grace. His replies were respected. When he came back from exile, which he had suffered for belief in the Trinity, all Africa looked upon him as another Augustine, and every church received him as its own pastor.”⁹³

With Hilderic the son of Thrasamund, peace did, in fact, return. But, shortly afterward, in 534, an expedition of Belisarius put an end to the Vandal domination, which had lasted a hundred years.⁹⁴ For a while it had the semblance of a great empire. In the interval between persecutions, the Vandal kings developed their navy prodigiously. This race, which in Spain had been an excellent agricultural population, in Africa was

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, V, 6; *PL*, LVIII, 243; Leclercq, *Les martyrs*, III, 392. On the miracle of Tipasa and analogous events of a natural order, which have been observed, see Newman, *History of My Religious Opinions*.

⁹² Explanation of psalm 36 (Vulgate).

⁹³ Bossuet, *Défense de la tradition*, Bk. V, chap. 21. Another victim of the persecution was the poet Dracontius who, in his captivity, wrote a poem in three strains, *Carmen de Deo*. Says Gaston Boissier: “This poem compares favorably with the poem of St. Avitus. In places it has even more brilliance and a keener feeling of the beauties of nature.” *L’Afrique romaine*, pp. 309 ff.

⁹⁴ The Church of Africa called that period “the hundred years’ captivity.” Labbe, *Concil.*, IV, 1755.

on the point of becoming a formidable naval power. It fell under the weight of its faults, of the rivalry of the African Moors, of the Roman reprisals, and undoubtedly also of the divine justice. In its own way it had been also "the scourge of God." The purifying results of this terrible providential mission—the theological works of St. Fulgentius of Ruspe, the dramatic accounts of the chronicler Victor Vitensis, the poem of Dracontius, and a trace of the Vandal name left in Spain in the province of Andalusia—are all that remain of the domination of this barbarous people, that was endowed with so powerful a vitality.

Visigoths in Spain

It would seem that the passing of the Vandals to Africa should have allowed the Visigoths to establish themselves more firmly in Spain. But internal defects continued to disturb their kingdom. From the death of Alaric II in 507, to the coming of Recared in 586, nearly all its kings were stabbed to death. Most of them, before dying in this wretched manner, had lived in a wretched manner. The immediate successor of Alaric, Gisaldic, the King's natural son, was, according to St. Isidore, "as detestable for his loose morals as he was base by birth."⁹⁵ Another king, Theudis, was assaulted and massacred in the midst of a feast by the notables of the kingdom whose homes he had dishonored.⁹⁶

In this connection, Gregory of Tours says: "The Goths had adopted the hateful custom of killing in this way such of their kings as did not please them, and appointing the person on whom their fancy fell."⁹⁷ When we recall that these monarchs, by virtue of the organization of the Arian Churches, were the

⁹⁵ *PL*, LXXXIII, 1067 ff.

⁹⁶ St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, p. 107.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

chiefs of the episcopacy and of the clergy, we can easily explain the internal disorder of the kingdom.

However, besides the heretical population, there were numerous Catholics, the fruit of the old Roman preaching of the faith. These offered a contrast of example to the heretics by the ardor of their faith. In 542, in a war against the Franks, the Catholics had saved Saragossa by the intercession of St. Vincent.⁹⁸ A few years later there arrived in Galicia a holy missionary from Pannonia, called Martin, like his illustrious countryman the Bishop of Tours. St. Gregory of Tours praises his learning and holiness. A short while afterward Theodomin I or Cararic,⁹⁹ king of the Suevi, following the miraculous cure of his son by a relic of St. Martin of Tours,¹⁰⁰ abjured Arianism and named St. Martin archbishop of Braga, where a council was held in 572.¹⁰¹ The conversion of the head of that ephemeral kingdom of the Suevi, which disappeared less than a half century later, of itself did not have a great influence upon the destinies of the Church in Spain. But the impulse was given. After St. Martin of Braga, a monk, Donatus, also preached the perfect spiritual life in Spain and founded a monastery at Jativa.¹⁰² It was about this period that the number of hermits in Spain grew rapidly. The most famous was St. Emilian the Hooded (*Oemilianus cucullatus*), whom the Spanish people honor under the name of St. Milán.¹⁰³ A more and more powerful expansion of Catholic life encircled the Arian Church, which was disorganized, exhausted, and spiritless. The conversion of the King of the Visigoths gave it the final blow.

⁹⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 106.

⁹⁹ St. Gregory of Tours says Carraric; St. Isidore of Seville, better situated to be well informed, says Theodomin, successor of Carraric.

¹⁰⁰ St. Gregory of Tours, *De miraculis S. Martini*, I, 11; *PL*, LXXI, 923 ff.

¹⁰¹ Villanano, *Summa conciliorum*, I, 126.

¹⁰² Mariana, *Histoire de l'Espagne*, Vol. I, Bk. V, chap. 55.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, chap. 51.

St. Hermengild

The story of this conversion is mingled with a bloody family tragedy which the chroniclers John of Biclaro, Isidore of Seville, and Gregory of Tours, all contemporaries of the events, relate at considerable length.

Hermengild, the son of King Leovigild (who by his successful wars and his legislative work was one of the greatest rulers of Visigoth Spain), had married a Frankish princess, Ingundis, daughter of King Sigebert and Brunehilde. The presence of the young Catholic princess at the Spanish court, and shortly afterward the conversion of Prince Hermengild under the influence of his relative St. Leander archbishop of Seville, stirred the wrath of Queen Goswintha, the second wife of Leovigild and a fanatical Arian.¹⁰⁴ Urged on by his wife, the King decreed a violent persecution. The firmness of the Christians in the presence of the threats was at first admirable. Gregory of Tours mentions the torture of a priest who, in the midst of his torments, confessed the dogma of the Trinity.¹⁰⁵ A few Christians, however, won by the King's munificence, weakened. Of this number was Vincent bishop of Saragossa. Then Leovigild's tactics changed. People were no longer forcibly rebaptized. Even insistence upon rebaptizing was abandoned. Simply an ambiguous formula was required: "Glory be to the Father, by the Son, in the Holy Ghost."¹⁰⁶ Many defections took place.

Then it was that Hermengild, not without an internal struggle, took a resolve of serious import.¹⁰⁷ Some groups of faithful

¹⁰⁴ St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, V, 39.

¹⁰⁵ St. Gregory of Tours, *De gloria martyrum*, I, 82; *PL*, LXXI, 778 f. St. Isidore of Seville; *PL*, LXXXIII, 1071.

¹⁰⁶ This formula was orthodox in earlier times, and was even current among the Greek fathers. We find it in St. Basil (see De Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la Trinité*, III, 31). But the interpretation given it by the Arians made it unacceptable.

¹⁰⁷ St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, VI, 29 (43).

Catholics, desolate at seeing the Catholic faith being lost, were eager to shake off the yoke of tyranny. Hermengild placed himself at their head, won to his side the Suevi of Galicia, the Basques of the Pyrenees, the Roman garrisons of the sea-coast, and, at the head of a powerful army, marched against his father.¹⁰⁸ But through treason he was seized in a church,¹⁰⁹ and was thrown into a dungeon, where he refused to receive the Eucharist from the hand of an Arian bishop. He was beheaded by the stroke of an axe.¹¹⁰ The Church honors St. Hermengild with the title of martyr and celebrates his feast on April 13.

St. Leander

It is said that a short time after this, in 586, King Leovigild, on his deathbed was touched by remorse and called Bishop Leander, asked forgiveness for his crimes, and begged the Bishop to do for his second son Recared what he had done for Hermengild, that is, convert him to the Catholic faith.¹¹¹ The saintly Bishop carried out his mission. He instructed Recared. Says St. Isidore: "Recared, unlike his father, was endowed with a very gentle character, and with a wise and prudent mind." In the tenth month of his reign, in 587, he publicly abjured the heresy, confessed the equality of the three divine Persons,¹¹² and received the anointing with holy chrism.¹¹³ On this occasion the King returned to the Catholics the churches which Leovigild had taken away from them and he also built other churches, several of them at his own expense. We see him

¹⁰⁸ It was on this occasion that St. Leander went to Constantinople, where he formed a great friendship with St. Gregory the Great. See *supra*, p. 70.

¹⁰⁹ St. Gregory of Tours, *op. cit.*, V, 39.

¹¹⁰ St. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, III, 3; Paul the Deacon, III, 214.

¹¹¹ St. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, III, 31.

¹¹² St. Gregory of Tours, *op. cit.*, IX, 15, p. 383.

¹¹³ On this ceremony of anointing converted Arians with holy chrism, see Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, pp. 324 f., 340.

gather wise counselors about him, the chief of them being his uncle, St. Leander.¹¹⁴

Leander, belonging to a family of the high nobility of Cartagena, was the eldest of a family of saints. St. Isidore, who succeeded him as bishop of Seville, and St. Fulgentius, who became bishop of his native city, were his brothers. His sister was St. Florentina, for whom he composed his *Institutio virginum*. This work of St. Leander, together with a magnificent discourse delivered at the Third Council of Toledo, are all we possess of his writings. The quality of the *Institutio* makes us regret the loss of his two polemical books against the Arians and of his correspondence with St. Gregory the Great. But his political work is known to us. He has rightly been called the St. Remigius of Spain. Until his death (596), he sustained King Recared with his advice.

Leander was the soul of that great Council of Toledo, the third in the series of councils bearing that name, in which the Spanish nation, represented by its king, its queen, sixty-four bishops, seven representatives of bishops, and the great personages of the realm, *primores gentis gothicae*, solemnly abjured the Arian heresy. In a profession of faith to which the whole assembly subscribed and which is preserved in the official report of the Council, King Recared declared his belief, not only in the equality of the divine Persons, but also in the procession of the Holy Ghost *a Patre Filioque*. This new precision of the doctrine, expressed by the word *Filioque*, which was destined to be the occasion of so many disputes, began therefore to be regarded as essential to the faith.¹¹⁵ From Spain it passed to France and was later of obligation throughout the universal Church.

This council of 589 was followed by fifteen other national

¹¹⁴ St. Leander was the brother of Leovigild's first wife.

¹¹⁵ This is the second time that it is found in a profession of faith. It was used in a council of Galicia, held in 447.

councils of Toledo. It has quite justly been said that they made Spain.¹¹⁶

The Councils of Toledo

The Spanish councils of Toledo had this special feature, that they sprang from the national assembly, or rather they were at the same time national councils and national assemblies. Ordinarily questions of dogma and ecclesiastical discipline were treated during the first three days. The bishops and abbots alone were then in attendance.¹¹⁷ But on the morning of the fourth day the doors were opened to the high officers, dukes, counts, and judges, and, as they used to say, the judgment of the people was joined to the judgment of God; after the *vox Dei*, the *vox populi* was heard.¹¹⁸

Guizot, in his *History of Civilization in Europe*, sums up in a few strokes the work of the councils of Toledo from the standpoint of general civilization. He says:

In Spain, a different power, that of the Church, endeavored to restore the work of civilization. Instead of the ancient German assemblies of warriors, the assembly that had most influence in Spain was the Council of Toledo and in this council the bishops bore sway, although it was attended by the higher order of the laity. Open the laws of the Visigoths, and you will discover that it is not a code compiled by barbarians, but bears convincing marks of having been drawn up by the philosophers of the age—by the clergy. It abounds in general views, in theories, and in theories, indeed, altogether foreign to barbarian manners. Thus, for example, we know that the legislation

¹¹⁶ In France it seems that the principal source of civilization was the personal influence of certain great bishops. In Germany the chief influence was rather that of a few great monasteries. In England, especially from Bede to Alcuin, we note the influence of the schools. In Spain the preponderant part in the work of civilization unquestionably was the work of the national councils. The eighteenth and last council of Toledo was held in 701. It is the only one whose acts are lost.

¹¹⁷ At the Third Council of Toledo (589) we see, for the first time, the abbots seated in a conciliar assembly.

¹¹⁸ Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. 28.

of the barbarians was a personal legislation; that is to say, the same law only applied to one particular race of men. The Romans were judged by the old Roman laws, the Franks were judged by the Salian or Ripuarian code; in short, each people had its separate laws, though united in the same government, and dwelling together in the same territory. This is what is called personal legislation, in contradiction to real legislation, which is founded upon territory. Now this is exactly the case with the legislation of the Visigoths; it is not personal, but territorial.¹¹⁹ All the inhabitants of Spain, Romans, Visigoths, or what not, were compelled to yield obedience to one law. Read a little further and you will meet with still more striking traces of philosophy. Among the barbarians a fixed price was put upon a man, according to his rank in society—the life of the barbarian, the Roman, the free-man, and vassal, were not valued at the same amount—there was a graduated scale of prices. But the principle that all men's lives are of equal worth in the eyes of the law, was established by the code of the Visigoths. The same superiority is observable in their judicial proceedings: instead of the ordeal, the oath of compurgators, or trial by battle, you will find the proofs established by witnesses, and a rational examination made of the facts, such as might take place in a civilized society. In short, the code of the Visigoths bore throughout evident marks of learning, system, and polity. In it we trace the hand of the same clergy that acted in the Council of Toledo, and which exercised so large and beneficial an influence upon the government of the country.¹²⁰

Such principles of equality before the law and of respect for justice were bound to favor the abolition of slavery. The Church of Spain did not leave to the mere influence of ideas and of general principles the progress of the work of emancipation which it had begun at the Council of Elvira at the outset of the fourth century. The councils of Toledo intervened directly to defend the cause of the slaves. Jews engaged in the slave traffic. The councils forbade the sale of baptized slaves

¹¹⁹ This personal legislation is found in the law of Euric (Esmein, *Histoire du droit français*, p. 57). But the councils of Toledo abolished it, at least in the civil law.

¹²⁰ Guizot, *History of Civilization in Europe*, third lesson, p. 77.

to Jews, sometimes authorizing any of the faithful to redeem them, sometimes declaring them free without any price to be paid. Says the Tenth Council of Toledo: "We cannot be unmindful that these slaves have been redeemed by Jesus Christ. One ought rather buy them than sell them."¹²¹ The fourth and ninth councils of Toledo declare that the slaves or serfs of the Church domains must be freed by the bishop before they receive sacred orders.¹²² At that period it seems that the following formula was in use; it was discovered and published in the last century:

To all the inhabitants of this province let it be known that I, N., of the place called N., contemplating the salvation of my soul and that of my parents and kindred for the love of Christ who delivers us from the tyranny of Satan, have resolved to free from the irksome yoke of human servitude one of my slaves, called N., so that, bound to the divine service, with a free and tranquil soul he may continually pray for the remission of his sins, for me, and for mine; and that, ascending the steps of the sacred hierarchy, day by day nearer and more intimately he may have the means of imploring the divine mercy for us. And that this act of my will be the more valid, fixed and of perpetual duration, I have signed it in the presence of competent witnesses.¹²³

Little by little the clergy were performing the labors of servile origin. Says Guizot: "This circumstance is perhaps not one of the least that contributed to the efforts of the Church to ameliorate the condition of the serfs."¹²⁴ Later on, it is true, at the beginning of the feudal wars, the lords—the bishops and abbots were also lords—had a tendency not to strip themselves of their personnel of serfs and slaves;¹²⁵ but notwithstanding

¹²¹ The Tenth Council of Toledo, canon 7; Mansi, XI, 37. Third Council of Toledo; Mansi, IX, 996.

¹²² Mansi, X, 637; XI, 29.

¹²³ *Revue historique du droit français*, 1863, p. 422.

¹²⁴ Guizot, *Histoire de la civilisation en France*, twelfth lesson, I, 325.

¹²⁵ The Church had also to safeguard the rights of property and of justice which rebellions of serfs and slaves endangered at times. Marcel Fournier, basing his findings upon texts and upon events which these preoccupations explain, published (*Revue*

this temporal interest, the idea of justice and fraternity, always preached by the Church, eventually prevailed. Authentic history attests the truth of this fact. St. Isidore's definition of royal power was incorporated in the law of the Middle Ages by the capitularies of Charlemagne, the canonical treatises of Jonas, of Hincmar, and of Abbo, the councils of Paris (829) and of Trosly (909), and was appealed to in the eleventh century by St. Gregory VII. St. Isidore wrote as follows:

The king's special office is to govern his people with equity and justice. He should be the defender of the Churches, of the servants of God, of the widows, of the orphans, of all the poor, of all those who are without earthly backing. So far as he can, he should employ his zeal and his might in preventing injustice and, if such has been committed, in repressing it. He who is the judge of judges, ought also permit to reach his ears the plaint of the poor, for fear that those who are appointed by him and who take his place among the people, oppress the lowly by their neglect or injustice.¹²⁶

This is the same thought that we have already seen clearly proclaimed by St. Gregory the Great: he who is in a position of authority is above all else the servant of right and justice.

The work of the Spanish Church, therefore, in the sixth century, from the standpoint of the social institutions, had

historique, January–February, 1883) a study entitled, *Les affranchissements du V^e au XIII^e siècle*. He concludes that the Church was not favorable to enfranchisement and to the enfranchised. This view is refuted by Allard, *Esclaves, serfs et mainmortables*, chap. II. Renan wrote as follows: "The condition of the slave was even aggravated by one circumstance, the impossibility of disposing of the property of the Church. Who was his owner? Who could set him at liberty? The difficulty of deciding this question perpetuated ecclesiastical slavery" (Renan, *Marcus Aurelius*, pp. 300 f.). It is easy to answer this charge. Although the Church could not sell a slave, it could free him; and the Council of Agde, held in 506 under the Visigoths, declared that "if the bishop has given liberty to some slaves . . . his successor must respect that decision."

¹²⁶ PL, LXXXIII, 718–725. Note what St. Augustine says in *City of God*, Bk. V, chap. 24; PL, XLI, 170 f.

a very lofty and lasting significance. The laws framed by the councils of Toledo had a considerable part in forming the collection of edicts known at first under the name of *Forum judicum*, which was translated in the thirteenth century by King St. Ferdinand under the title of *Fuero juzgo*, and long remained the basis of Spanish law.

Assuredly we have no wish to pretend that there are no shadows in the picture. On that Spanish soil, where in ancient times was erected the first altar to the divinity of the emperors and where later the Inquisition assumed a character too political and too merciless, we regret to find a too complete fusion of the Church and the state. The very composition of the councils of Toledo favored this abuse. The bishop was too much a political personage, and politics was overmuch mingled in the affairs of the Church. The Church continued to be proclaimed Catholic, but often people acted as though they thought it Spanish; and the Spanish state, with surprising candor, did not hesitate to use force to maintain the faith, as it would do in defense of a national institution. King Sisebut forcibly obliged converted Jews to remain Catholics. True, St. Isidore of Seville rose up against this policy, and the Fourth Council of Toledo (633) blames Sisebut by name and protests its respect for liberty of conscience.¹²⁷ As we are told by Leclercq, the recent historian of Christian Spain, the Jews were, nevertheless, "the perpetual drudges" of the Spanish state.¹²⁸ They were pursued, hunted out. However guilty they may have been on some points, we cannot help pitying their lot. However sincere those who persecuted them, we must acknowledge that, if pushed to these limits, the repression of

¹²⁷ *Sicut enim homo proprii arbitrii voluntate sequenti obediens periit, sic vocante gratia Dei propriae mentis conversione homo quisque credendo salvatur. Ergo non vi, sed libera arbitrii facultate, ut convertantur suadendi sunt, non potius impellendi.* Fourth Council of Toledo, sec. 57; Mansi, X, 663.

¹²⁸ Leclercq, *L'Espagne chrétienne*, p. xxxiv.

infidels is nothing else but the survival in a Christian country of a pagan conception of religion.¹²⁹

We should have unqualified admiration for the work of the councils of Toledo when, in their purely ecclesiastical canons, they proclaim, in lofty words, the obedience that is due to Catholic dogmas and endeavor to restore in all bishops, priests, and laymen a regard for the purest Christian morality. The first canon of the council of 589, which closely followed Reccared's abjuration, proposes as the rule of faith of Catholic Spain, "the maintenance in full vigor of all the canons of the councils and of all the synodal letters of the bishops of Rome."¹³⁰ Then follows the order to sing at mass, before the communion, the symbol of Nicaea and Constantinople.¹³¹

Previously this practice had been special to the East. It is through Spain that the custom was introduced into the West.

Then come the canons about the life of bishops and clerics, who are particularly reminded of the holy duty of clerical continence,¹³² and prescriptions for the simple faithful, which they strove to connect with the old regulations of penance. The faithful were ordered, before returning to communion with the Church, to do penance for their sins.¹³³ The fathers of the Fourth Council of Toledo (633) even reminded the kings of their duty, and this they did with remarkable political sense. "With all due humility," they beg the Spanish sovereigns present and future to bear in mind that their power is limited: (1) by the higher rights of justice and charity;¹³⁴ (2) by un-

¹²⁹ "This survival of the pagan concept and its use by the Spanish councils are worthy of attention," says Leclercq. "It would be possible to show the transitions and, as it were, the genealogy of this concept." Leclercq, *op. cit.*, p. xxxiii.

¹³⁰ Mansi, IX, 992.

¹³¹ Chap. 2; Mansi, IX, 992.

¹³² Chaps. 3, 5, 7, 13, 18; Mansi, IX, 993-997. The clerics are there called *religiosi*. At that period the word "*religiosus*" was often synonymous with "*clericus*."

¹³³ Chap. 11; Mansi, IX, 995.

¹³⁴ *Cum iustitia et pietate populos regatis*. Mansi, X, 640.

touchable constitutional laws;¹³⁵ (3) by the control of the people or their representatives, in the exercise of a public justice regularly constituted.¹³⁶

While the bishops and abbots, in the councils of Toledo, inspired Christian laws, scholars and saints gave noble examples. There was no one of outstanding genius; but the names of St. Leander of Seville, of St. Fulgentius of Cartagena, of St. Fructuosus of Braga, and of St. Braulio of Saragossa cannot be passed over in silence.

St. Isidore of Seville

The most eminent of all these bishops was St. Isidore of Seville. The Eighth Council of Toledo proclaimed him "the great doctor of his age and the glory of the Church."¹³⁷ and this judgment agrees with the conclusions of modern scholarship. Says Bardenhewer: "St. Isidore surveyed and explored in every direction the field of knowledge of the seventh century; among the early ecclesiastical writers of Spain, there is no pen to rival the fecundity of his."¹³⁸

Of course, we must not deceive ourselves. Isidore of Seville was a tireless worker, but he was chiefly a compiler. His principal work is a vast encyclopedia, at which he labored almost all his life, until the very eve of his death. He called it the *Book of Etymologies*.¹³⁹ In fact, he begins by giving an etymology, often bizarre, of the word he is studying; then,

¹³⁵ *Si quis contra reverentiam legum.* Mansi, *ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ne quisquam vestrum solus, in causis capitum aut rerum, sententiam ferat; sed consensu publico cum rectoribus ex iudicio manifesto delinquentium culpa patescat.* Mansi, X, 640. On the councils of Toledo and in general on the councils of Spain, see the large collection of Cardinal Aguirre, *Collectio maxima conciliorum omnium Hispaniae . . . cum notis et dissertationibus.*

¹³⁷ *Nostri saeculi doctor egregius, Ecclesiae catholicae novissimum decus . . . et in saeculorum fine doctissimus.* Mansi, X, 1215.

¹³⁸ Bardenhewer, *Les pères de l'Église*, III, 218.

¹³⁹ *Etymologiorum seu Originum libri XX.* This work forms Volume LXXXII of Migne's *Patrologia latina*.

beyond the word, he goes to the thing. Isidore must have stripped whole libraries. He gives us the state of knowledge of his time. The Scholastic writers drew extensively upon this work. St. Isidore has been called the last of the Church fathers.¹⁴⁰ It is true that after him and until St. Bernard, scholarship is silent over a period of four centuries. Perhaps it would be more just to say that, with Cassiodorus and Boethius, who preceded him in Italy, with Bede, who followed him in England, with Hincmar of Reims, Paschasius Radbertus, and Rabanus Maurus, who continued his work in France in the ninth century, Isidore formed the principal link of a chain connecting the literature of the fathers to that of the Scholastics. The author of the False Decretals, to give his famous collection the prestige of a great name, placed it under the name of St. Isidore of Seville.¹⁴¹

Decline of Visigothic Spain

When the saintly bishop died, in 636, it seemed that everything was preparing a brilliant and enduring destiny for the Visigothic kingdom of Spain. But half a century later we find it in full decline. The nobility became more and more divided, the power passed back and forth, at the pleasure of the factions, into unworthy hands. License knew no bounds.¹⁴² The councils continued their lawmaking, but they went beyond reasonable moderation. The Seventeenth Council of Toledo, taking action against the Jews, even those outwardly baptized, decreed confiscation of their property, their reduction to a state of slavery, and the taking of their children away from

¹⁴⁰ Rauschen-Ricard, *Éléments de patrologie et d'histoire des dogmes*, pp. 341 ff.

¹⁴¹ The work of St. Isidore may be usefully consulted for the history of dogma, of canon law, and of the liturgy. In his *Etymologies* he reckons three sacraments: baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist (*PL*, LXXXII, 255). Penance is listed elsewhere, between fasting and the litanies. In the *De officiis* he enumerates, on the same line, baptism, the consecration of kings, and confirmation.

¹⁴² Aguirre, *Concil. Tolet.*, XVI.

them. Corruption entered the ranks of the clergy. Perhaps we should seek the origin of the whole evil in the decline of clerical morals. Says Cardinal Bourret: "The Church was profaned by blameworthy intrusions and the growing depravity of her ministers; the salt of the earth lost its savor; the clergy dishonored itself by serving every unworthy ambition and approving every violence."¹⁴³

"The misfortunes of Spain," writes Cardinal Pitra, "came likewise from the rapid decadence of its monastic institutions. Ill-advised attempts, double and mixed monasteries, families withdrawing from society *en masse* out of selfishness and cupidity, the scarcity of genuine vocations, and the forcible filling of monasteries with mercenary novices, all these disorders are indicated by the documents of the time."¹⁴⁴ Perhaps this clerical and monastic decline should be attributed to imprudent methods of recruiting clerics and monks, prematurely transferring episcopal and abbatial authority from the hands of the Spanish-Roman race, whose Christianity had been proved, into the hands of the Visigothic race, which was still too much imbued with barbarian morals and infected with the poison of Arius.

In any event, when in 711, under King Roderick (or Rodrigues), a certain rebellious nobleman, Count Julian, abetted by a bishop who was a traitor to his country, Oppas by name, called the Saracens into Spain, the country offered no resistance. At the battle of Guadalete the followers of King Witiza, Roderick's predecessor, withdrew without fighting, and the Spanish army disbanded.¹⁴⁵ Only the valiant Pelayo, along with a few warriors, remained unconquered in the cavern of

¹⁴³ Bourret, *L'école chrétienne de Séville*, p. 196.

¹⁴⁴ Pitra, *Vie de saint Léger*, p. xix. Cf. Aguirre, *Dissertatio de antiqua disciplina Ecclesiae Hispaniae circa clericos lapsos in peccatum carnis. Collectio maxima*, IV, 163 ff.

¹⁴⁵ Lavissee and Rambaud, *Histoire générale*, I, 475-477; Leclercq, *L'Espagne chrétienne*, p. 383.

Our Lady of Cavadonga, where he began the great struggle which lasted eight centuries and ended with the expulsion of the Moors and the re-establishment of the Spanish kingdom. But it is not easy to determine to what extent this second conquest was the work of the Visigothic race.

Thus, while the peoples of Teutonic race were founding France, England, Germany, and the three states of Scandinavia, of all the peoples of Gothic race none had succeeded in forming themselves into a stable organization. The most brilliant successes of the Heruli, the Ostrogoths, the Lombards, the Burgundians, the Vandals, and the Visigoths had been followed by lamentable catastrophes. Must such eventualities be attributed to external and fortuitous events? I am not aware that anyone has ever maintained that such is the case. It can scarcely be held that nations die except by internal causes. In a people animated by a common ideal, the will to live makes it live. Should we, in agreement with the school of Count de Gobineau, trace back the whole problem to a question of racial inequalities? ¹⁴⁶ Or rather, in accord with Rohrbacher, must we consider these events merely as the effect of the dissolving influence of Arianism, in opposition to the vivifying power of the Catholic Church? ¹⁴⁷ Or is it all simply a question of social organization, the Teutonic race triumphing solely because, during a long stay on the coasts of Norway, it had acquired that particularist form which makes nations powerful and prosperous? This is the view of Henri de Tourville and Edmond Demolins, who appeal to the authority of Le Play.¹⁴⁸ Is Kurth nearer the truth when he adds to the influence of Arianism that of a premature contact with the refined civilization of the Empire? ¹⁴⁹ Bearing in mind the hegemony of the

¹⁴⁶ Count de Gobineau, *De l'inégalité des races humaines*, *passim*, especially chap. 14, and the dedication to the king of Hanover, I, vi-viii.

¹⁴⁷ Rohrbacher, *Histoire universelle de l'Église*.

¹⁴⁸ *La science sociale* XXIX (1900), 124; XXX, 511-516.

¹⁴⁹ Kurth, *Les origines de la civilisation moderne*, Vol. I, chap. 7, pp. 415-450.

Assyrians over the Babylonians, of the Macedonians over southern Greece, of the Castilians in Spain, of the Piedmontese in Italy, of the Prussians in Germany, must we appeal to that law of history which, in every conflict of peoples, points to the infallible triumph of the race that has lived in the roughest climate and endured the hardest manner of life? ¹⁵⁰ Or, lastly, is the problem reduced to a question of a more or less potent and coherent national ideal, which is the impelling idea of a people? ¹⁵¹

It seems reasonable to suppose that each of the assigned causes has exercised some influence upon the historical phenomenon we are considering. Yet it would appear that the primordial cause must be sought in the peaceful contact of the Goths with Roman civilization. Although it is true that, on a battle-field or in the fatigues of a siege or of a campaign, the hardiest people, therefore ordinarily the one most toughened by climate, has all the chances of triumph, the same is not true in the peaceful contact of barbarous people with a civilized people, that is, with a people that has a literature, a philosophy, and some form of administration. The former very rapidly loses what constitutes its strength, and only very slowly acquires what constitutes the might of the civilized people, which, according as its civilization is beneficial or injurious, raises it in its rise or drags it down in its fall. This last was the case of the Gothic peoples, too soon introduced into the governmental administration and to the Roman army and thus contaminated by the morals and customs of the decline. Like individuals, peoples do not with impunity rush through the halting-places without stopping.

Softened by the decadent civilization of the Empire, the Goths easily embraced that weakened form of Christianity—Arianism. And for them Arianism became an additional

¹⁵⁰ Hubault, *Histoire générale*, p. 31.

¹⁵¹ Fouillée, *Psychologie du peuple français*, *passim*.

element of atrophy and dissociation. Arianism, denying the incarnation of God, the divinity of Christ, and the survival of Christ in the Church and in the human soul, was unable to engender a real proselytism or give rise to a theological movement. The Arian peoples had neither of these. Endless discussions and violent persecutions are not a theology and an apostolate. Those little national Churches, with bishops appointed and recalled by the civil power, possessed none of the breadth and independence of the great universal Church, obedient to the representative of Jesus Christ. The Churches suffered from all the ailments of the states, and the states from all the ailments of the Churches.

Hence gradually the Arian Churches and the Gothic kingdoms disappeared, one after the other, stifled by real Catholic life.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Magnin, *L'Eglise Wisigothique au VII^e siècle*.

CHAPTER X

The Church among the Slavs

IN 711, just when Visigothic Spain was succumbing at the battle of Guadalete, Constantinople was threatened by new barbarians.¹ A Bulgar army was encamped before its walls. The latest of the great invaders, the Bulgars were mingled with those Slavic bands, those Slavenes as they were called, who, about the close of the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh century, had unobtrusively slipped into the Balkan peninsula, into the midst of the Thracian-Illyrian population. The latter, as we know, had long since been Romanized and converted to Christianity. But Slavs and Bulgars gradually supplanted the old inhabitants of the soil, destroyed their churches, and almost everywhere replaced the Christian religion by the idolatrous worship which they brought with them from beyond the Danube. The Bulgars, a practical race adapted for the work of government, gave cohesion and unity to the dreamy Slavic race, which was dispersed in numerous tribes. In 678, between the Danube and the Hemus, King Isperikh founded the Bulgar state, which thereafter continually disturbed Byzantium. In 708 he repulsed an army of Justinian II; in 711, under Philippicus Bardanes, he took the offensive and advanced his army to the very walls of the capital of the Empire.

For the Church and for the Empire there was cause for alarm, the more so because, beyond the Bulgar kingdom, in the vast plain stretching from the Caucasus to the White Sea and from the Baltic to the Ural, a multitude of other Slavic tribes

¹ Pargoire, *L'Église byzantine*, p. 177.

was stirring, disunited, indeed, and cut in two from east to west, by the repeated invasions of Ural-Altai races, but restless, threatening, terrible. The Magyar people had remained like a wedge sticking into its living flesh. But the Slav race remained united by the memory of a common origin and by the hope of a universal domination; and this twofold bond was stronger than the particular patriotism of the different national groups.

Slavs in the Empire

The Slavs (so called from *slawa*, "glory," or from *slawo*, "word") belonged to the Indo-European race. The emperors and the popes, from the very beginning of relations with them, did everything to hasten their assimilation with the Roman world and convert them to Christianity. Heraclius permitted the Serbs and the Croats to settle in Illyricum, then solicited Pope John IV, whose patriarchate extended to that province, to send them some missionaries. The results of this mission, undertaken in a way by imperial order, with a Byzantine officer behind the Latin preacher, were rapid but not lasting.² The Slavs liked to serve in the army as mercenaries; it was through the army that the influence of Christianity reached them. "There a thoroughly Christian atmosphere impressed them. By becoming imperial soldiers, they became brothers in arms of those for whom the Blessed Virgin fought at Constantinople, St. Demetrius at Thessalonica, St. Andrew at Patrae. In the camps they were in continual contact with the numerous clerics who performed the duties of military chaplains for the Byzantine contingents."³ And so, when the day came for their discharge, many of them had abandoned idolatry. It was sometimes as neophytes, often as apostles, that

² Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*; PG, CXIII, 284.

³ *Acta Maximii*; PG, XC, 136-172.

they returned home.”⁴ But the nation as a whole, especially its leaders, remained pagans, ferocious pagans. St. Theodore of Studium considered it a sacrilege to give them hostages.⁵ Frequently their Christian captives were compelled to choose between apostasy and death.⁶

Conversion of King Boris

The appearance of things was changed by the conversion to the Catholic faith, of the chief of the Bulgarians, Boris (not Borgoris), in 864. We have no exact details about the circumstances of this conversion. Some writers have mentioned the influence of Boris' sister who was converted at Constantinople and who upon her return is supposed to have convinced her brother of the truth of the Christian religion. She is made out to be the St. Clotilda of the Bulgarians, and the monk St. Methodius as the St. Remigius. In any case, this latter cannot be the St. Methodius who was the apostle of Moravia. We shall speak of him presently.⁷ In his conversion, was King Boris yielding merely to the power of the truth? Was he influenced by political considerations, a desire to set up, in opposition to the magnificence of the Byzantine emperors, the pomp of Catholic worship, with its priests and Levites assembled about his sacred person? Was not this the first manifestation of that great ambitious longing of the Slavic race, which we see take shape in Bulgaria with Tsar Symeon, in Moravia with the great Swatopluk, in Russia with Jaroslav the Great, and which perhaps gives us the key to the whole history of that race, at least in the heart of the Middle Ages? At any rate this ambitious motive may have existed along with

⁴ Pargoire, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

⁵ *Acta sanctorum*, January, III, 54.

⁶ *Vita Germani patriarchae*, no. 29, in Μαυροκορδάτειος Βιβλιοθήκη, *L'Église byzantine*, p. 363.

⁷ *Acta sanctorum*, October, XI, 120; Lapôte, *L'Europe et le Saint-Siège*, pp. 102 f.

loftier and more intimate reasons in the soul of the Bulgarian king.⁸

Those who compare Boris to Clovis, and also the Bulgarians who honor him as a saint, must acknowledge that, as in the case of Clovis, King Boris at his baptism did not put off the cruel practices of barbarism. He was baptized in 864⁹ by a Byzantine bishop, with Emperor Michael the Drunkard as godfather. One of his first acts was then to order his subjects to be converted, too. When several of them rebelled on this occasion, Boris had fifty-two families of *boiards* or noblemen massacred, including the women and children. Pope Nicholas I severely reproved this act of savage cruelty.¹⁰

Very strange is the life of this converted barbarian, whose Christianity, we are told, "at times savored more of the steppe than of the Gospel."¹¹ He gladly took conspicuous part in public festivals and in giving mighty blows with his lance, but in the evening he often put on sackcloth, furtively slipped into a church, and there spent the whole night on the stone pavement.¹² Boris did more than practice these mortifications and engage in these prayers; he abdicated his power in favor of his eldest son, shaved his head, and became a monk.¹³ And then of a sudden he cast off his monastic habit. Learning that his son Vladimir, dissolute drunkard, had adopted the old religion of the ancestors and the customs of festivals, "at which wine was drunk out of a skull of a dead enemy," the monk Boris left his cell, again put on the heavy sword and the bronze belt of the Bulgarian warriors, pursued his son, seized him, and ordered his eyes to be dug out. Then he returned to

⁸ Lapôte, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

⁹ According to the *Acta sanctorum*, *loc. cit.*, this was in 866. Lapôte prefers the date 864.

¹⁰ Hincmar, *Annales*, year 866, pp. 473 f.; *PL*, CXIX, 983.

¹¹ Lapôte, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

¹² *Acta sanctorum*, *loc. cit.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

his monastery and resumed in peace the interrupted course of his prayers.¹⁴

Pope Nicholas' *Responsa ad Bulgaros*

What was the political inspiration of this Clovis of the Bulgarians? We can find none other than the naïve and violent desire to be a king in the grand style, to dazzle the world, to become a sort of emperor of the East. He, too, was a victim of that Byzantine fascination, which afflicted nearly all the peoples of the Gothic race, a fascination which in no small measure accounted for their adherence to Arianism. So it is we see Boris at the same time turning to the Pope, to the Patriarch of Constantinople (Photius), to Emperor Louis the German, to all from whom he might hope to receive help in his attempts to reach a splendid eminence. Finally it was the Pope's side that he took. And he did so with energy. Grasping his hair, he exclaimed: "I swear that all my life I will be the servitor of St. Peter." His Christian conscience, which remained untainted by ambition, led him to inquire of the Church of Rome about various questions of doctrine and liturgy. He knew that Rome was strict on these points. He set forth his doubts. King Boris' questionnaire occasioned one of the most valuable documents of canon law, the famous *Responsa Nicolai ad Bulgaros*. We will speak of it again later on. Besides other questions, Boris asked Pope St. Nicholas I what should replace the usual Bulgarian oath upon the sword, the horse's tail which they raised as a flag or standard, and the broad national pantaloons worn by Bulgarian women.¹⁵ Then again this

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, and Lapôtre, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁵ *Responsa Nicolai ad Bulgaros*, nos. 33, 59, 67; *PL*, CXIX, 992, 1002, 1005. The wise Pontiff replied that it was improper to swear on a sword or on any other created object, but oaths should be taken only on God and holy things such as the Gospel. He said that swearing by a horse's tail should be replaced by swearing by the cross. With regard to the third question, he says: *Quod de femoralibus sciscitamine super-*

scrupulous Christian would suddenly go to the extreme of audacity. He abruptly changed the liturgical language and the diocesan organization of his kingdom; in short, he treated the Church in Bulgaria as if Rome did not exist.¹⁶ These were serious indications. They became accentuated under his successors and ultimately led Bulgaria into the Greek Schism.

Vladimir, Boris' successor, fulfilled the forebodings of his earlier years. He was followed by his brother Symeon (892-927), who, although avoiding the brutalities of his elder brother, fell into habits of indolence and luxury. In his case the desire to imitate the *basileus* of Byzantium was an obsession. He was the first to assume the pompous title of tsar. He was also fond of being called the semi-Greek. He wore the purple cloak and, so it seems, was treated as an emperor by the chancery of Constantinople.¹⁷ This was the height of Bulgarian power. But its decline came very soon. At the end of the tenth century, Borises, the second successor of Symeon, allowed Bulgaria to be annexed to the Greek Empire. Leo the Deacon says that Borises exchanged the royal mantle for the dress of a Byzantine schoolmaster.¹⁸ In 1015 Emperor Basil, the Bulgaroktonos or Slayer of the Bulgars, captured Achrida, the capital, and shortly afterward completely subjugated Bulgaria.

A reawakening of ambition and autonomy again stirred the Bulgar nation in the twelfth century. Pope Innocent III gave it an independent hierarchy; but at the same time from Bulgaria came the heresy of the Bogomili. This heresy, sprung from ancient Manichaeism, gave birth to the errors of the

vacuum esse putamus. Nam sive vos sive feminae vestrae sive deponatis sive induatis femoralia, nec saluti efficit, nec ad virtutum proficit incrementum. Sane quoniam diximus jussa fuisse femoralia fieri, notandum est, quia nos spiritualiter induimur femoralibus, cum carnis libidinem per abstinentiam coarctamus.

¹⁶ Lapôte, *L'Europe et le Saint-Siège*, p. 73.

¹⁷ Rambaud, *L'empire grec au Xe siècle*, pp. 342 f.

¹⁸ Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, Bk. IX; PG, CXVII, 885.

Cathari and the Albigenses.¹⁹ Not long after that, the Bulgar nation fell into the Greek Schism. Still later (1453), abandoned by the West which it disdained and by the East which was powerless to defend it, Bulgaria fell beneath the Mussulman yoke, and a large part of the country's nobility embraced Mohammedanism.²⁰

Missions in Moravia

The ambitious longing of the Slav race, which came to nothing in Bulgaria, seemed for a moment to be realized in Moravia. If we take into account only the duration of the converted nation and of the constituted Church, the conversion of the Moravians holds the last rank in the history of Christian origins in Europe. The Slav Church of Moravia had but an ephemeral existence. We may say that it was non-existent before the arrival of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, and that it ceased to exist after their death. As to Moravia, in the middle of the ninth century it was merely a little Slav tribe subject to the domination of Germany. At the end of the ninth century, under the great Swatopluk, it became an empire, but that empire collapsed in the tenth century under the blows of the Magyar invasion. However, the history of the conversion of Moravia assumes a capital importance if we consider the work of the two apostles, St. Cyril and St. Methodius, and the bearing of that work upon the future of the whole Slav race. Says Hilferding, a Russian historian: "No other hero of our race can be compared to Cyril and Methodius from this point

¹⁹ Bossuet's opinion, that the heresy of the Albigenses descended from Manichaeism through the Bulgarians, although contested by Rébelliau (*Bossuet historien du protestantisme*, p. 475), is now admitted by historical criticism. See *Bulletin critique*, 1895, p. 109. The words Bulgari, Bulgri, Bulgres then began to be used to indicate the heterodox. St. Louis advised his son to mistrust the evil Bulgres.

²⁰ In 1860 a return movement to the Church appeared in Bulgaria. At present there are about 60,000 Catholics there (Michel, *L'Orient et Rome*, p. 22). But the national vice—subordination of religion to politics—persists more than ever.

of view: their influence was panslavic, and this can be said of no one else.”²¹

Before them, missionaries of Latin race and of Greek, and especially of Germanic race, had preached the Gospel on the confines of Moravia. There, in the Danube valley, were the Avars, to whom the Slavic tribe was vassal. Missions were organized by Charlemagne for the conversion of the Avars and, it is said, were directed by Arno, a brother of Alcuin. They reached the tributary Slavs as well as the ruling Avars. In a papal bull (824) Eugenius II congratulated the Moravians and their prince for their fidelity to religion. This prince was called Moimir. But at that very time the nation had just freed itself from the Avars, whose empire had collapsed. But was not this merely a change of oppressors? The imperial missionaries, who were unacquainted with the language of these Slavs, appeared to be importing foreign customs and laws along with their religion. Besides, the Frankish princes were not satisfied with sending them priests and monks to convert them; from these same princes came also the soldiers who pillaged the land, the counts who levied payments upon them, the settlers who took their best lands. King Moimir, who was a very good Christian, protested in the name of national independence.

In 846, Louis the German deposed him and forced upon the Moravians the nephew of Moimir, one Wratislaw, hoping to find in him a more docile tool. But Louis was mistaken. Wratislaw and his people wished to remain Christians, but not to become subjects of the Germans. Then it was that the King and the leaders of the Moravian people conceived a bold and clever project that would reconcile their attachment to the Christian faith with their instincts of independence: it was to appeal to the Eastern emperor for missionaries. In 862, King Wratislaw sent to Michael III an embassy entrusted with

²¹ Hilferding, *Cyrille et Méthode, Œuvres complètes*, I, 299.

the following message: "Many Christian preachers have come to us from Italy, Germany, and Greece, bringing us diverse doctrines. But we Slavs are a simple people, and we have no one to teach us where is the truth. Therefore, generous monarch, choose for us a man able to speak to us according to reason, for from you issues the good faith, to be spread throughout the whole universe."

St. Cyril and St. Methodius

Michael III, notwithstanding the defect which gave him the name of Michael the Drunkard, was not without wisdom. For the spreading of the faith in Moravia, he chose two men who seemed providentially prepared for this important mission. They were two brothers, Constantine and Methodius. The former later took the name Cyril.

By the holiness of their life, by their learning, by their misfortunes, by the apparent failure of their mission, and by the extent of the remote results of their labor, St. Cyril and St. Methodius must be reckoned among the noble and great men of history. The two brothers were born at Thessalonica, a maritime city famous for its commerce and for its active and cosmopolitan population. "Thessalonica was one of the best schools of the East for anybody to make acquaintance with the languages and customs of Westerners and of Slavs. On the land side, in whatever direction he turned, a Thessalonian could not walk an hour without finding himself in the midst of people of the Slavic race. Everywhere were Slavonians, subjects or vassals of the Empire." ²²

Sons of a high imperial officer, Constantine and Methodius received an exceptionally fine education. Methodius, the elder, had an active, serious, prudent disposition, sturdy good sense, and unconquerable tenacity. At first he followed in his fa-

²² Lapôte, *L'Europe et le Saint-Siège*, p. 95.

ther's footsteps and for several years was governmental administrator of a "slavinia." Then he resigned from his high office and withdrew to a *laura*, where he led the life of an ascetic. Charged with the direction and reformation of an important monastery, he there had occasion to reveal, more than he had in the civil administration of his district, the resourcefulness of his character.

Constantine had an altogether different nature. Mild, thoughtful, mystical, he was especially fond of solitude and of study. He was called "the philosopher," and was pleased with the title. When a schoolmate of the young Prince Michael, the future Emperor Michael III, he studied under the finest teachers of poetry, history, mathematics, and dialectics. To avoid the honors that were offered him by the empress mother Theodora, who loved him like a son, and by the great logothete²³ Theoctistus who wished to give him his daughter in marriage, Constantine fled to an island in the Sea of Marmora. There he was found hidden in a monastery. Ordained priest, he had to accept from his imperial friend Michael III a chair of philosophy at Constantinople, where he charmed his hearers by the precision of his argumentation, the elegance of his speech, and the loftiness of his teaching.

Between the characters of the two brothers there was only one trait in common, but in both of them this trait was deeply marked: it was a burning zeal for the salvation of souls.

In the middle of the ninth century a twofold peril threatened the Church upon the frontiers of the Byzantine Empire: the Mussulman peril and the Jewish peril. The audacity of the followers of Islam increased with the strengthening of the dynasty of the Ommiads. In 838, the Anatolian city of Amorion yielded before the flood of a Mussulman army. Besides material destruction there was moral ruin. The prestige of Arab

²³ The great logothete was a sort of chief minister. Diehl, art. "logothète," in the *Grande Encyclopédie*.

learning at that time equaled that of Byzantine learning and led to defections among the Christians. To fight this evil the Emperor appealed to the brilliant professor of philosophy in his capital. In the lands of the Calif of Bagdad, Constantine met an adversary whose intellectual culture was on a level with his own, the scholarly Calif Mutawekkil. Although the Christian scholar did not succeed in converting him, at least he had the honor of sustaining the Christian religion before him.

The Jewish peril existed to some extent in all parts of the Empire. The war against images had emboldened the Israelites. Having returned into favor, they abused their influence to bring about apostasies among Christians. In 812, Patriarch Nicephorus charged their doctrine with invading the Empire like gangrene.²⁴ A movement of earnest proselytism appeared chiefly among the Jews living along the Black Sea.²⁵ The nation of the Khazars was on the point of being won to Judaism. Men of learning and courage were needed to dispel the danger. Michael turned to Constantine and Methodius. These apostles not only preserved the faith of this people living on the borders of the Empire, but also influenced them to make an alliance with Byzantium.

When Constantine was returning from his mission, weakened with fatigue and already afflicted with the ailment that would later carry him off, the ambassadors of Rastiz duke of Moravia reached Constantinople begging for missionaries. Once again the Emperor appealed to the devotion of Constantine and Methodius.

Constantine was a priest. But Methodius, a simple monk, had received only clerical tonsure. Upon their arrival in Moravia, the two apostles were the recipients of an enthusiastic welcome. Everything commended them to the friendly good

²⁴ *Vita Nicephori*, quoted in Pargoire, *L'Église byzantine*, p. 283.

²⁵ Rambaud, *L'empire grec au dixième siècle*, p. 273.

will of the Moravian people: their gentle and polished manners which so strongly contrasted with the rudeness of the German missionaries,²⁶ the grave solemnity of their chant and of their liturgical ceremonies in which the Hellenic genius had left its harmony, and lastly and especially the use of the Slavonic language which Constantine and Methodius knew thoroughly and which they employed not only in preaching, but also in the liturgical offices. Their perfect knowledge of this tongue enabled them in a few days to compose a practical system of writing Slavonic and of starting a translation of the Bible. "From the banks of the Danube to the high valleys of Moravia, there was a sort of enchantment and deliverance."²⁷ But the work of God was to be promptly marked with the seal of trial.

The German imperial authority, at news of the success of the two missionaries, took alarm. It feared that these Easterners would finally supplant the German clergy and that the Empire would thus find itself deprived of its best auxiliaries. A German army, led by Louis the German in person, marched along the left bank of the Danube and laid siege to Dowina the great fortress of Moravia. Duke Wratislaw avoided complete ruin only by renewing his oath of vassalage to the Emperor.²⁸ Other difficulties and conflicts, more painful to the hearts of the two apostles, awaited them. Cyril and Methodius, having gone to Italy to have some of their fellow-laborers ordained priests—neither of them was yet a bishop—stopped at Venice. Here their practice of celebrating mass in Slavonic greatly scandalized the Latin clergy. Canonists and theologians held

²⁶ Says Lapôte: "Those German bishops, those abbots who posed as devoted to the work of conversion, had been seen on the battlefield by the Moravians, who were better acquainted with the power of their weighty armor than with the power of their preaching. In 849 an expedition against the Bohemians was led by abbots. In 871 the warlike Bishop Arno of Würzburg appeared, warring against the Moravians, accompanied by the no less warlike bishop of Fulda, Sigehard." Lapôte, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 106 f.

²⁸ *Annales de Fulda*, year 864; *Hist. des Gaules*, VII, 171.

that by divine right only three languages had the privilege of being employed in the liturgical offices, namely, those that had been represented in the written inscription on the cross—Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. It was useless for the missionaries to explain that they thought they were doing something quite natural, since they came from the East where they were accustomed to seeing mass celebrated in Greek, Persian, Armenian, Syriac, and Coptic. Denounced to the Pope, they were obliged to go to Rome to exculpate themselves before Nicholas I.

In Rome they were received by Pope Adrian II, who had just succeeded Nicholas I and who heard the two accused missionaries with friendly attention. Moved by their piety and zeal and by the fruits obtained in Moravia by their apostolate, Adrian II, disregarding the trilingual theory of the Venetian theologians, authorized the missionaries to keep their Sacred Books in the Slavonic language, ordained Methodius priest, and was on the point of consecrating Constantine bishop when the latter died from the disease he had contracted during his mission among the Khazars. Before dying, the holy priest wished to make his profession as a monk. It was on this occasion that he took the name of Cyril under which he is honored in the Churches of the East and West. The Pope then conferred episcopal ordination upon Methodius and assigned to him as his circumscription, not only Moravia, but also Pannonia. In Moravia the aged Duke Wratislaw was deposed and was surrendered to the Germans by his nephew Swatopluk. The political disturbances obliged Methodius to proceed directly to Pannonia where fresh tribulations awaited him.

St. Methodius in Pannonia

The province of Pannonia, located on the shores of Lake Balaton near Bavaria, had already been converted by the

Germans. When Methodius celebrated mass there in Slavonic, the same scandal arose as had occurred in Venice. But, in the presence of these lord bishops and these lord abbots, "who savored more of horse trappings than of the altar,"²⁹ and who were more at home in the use of arms than in the handling of Aristotelian syllogisms, there could be no question, as in Italy, of attempting to treat the dispute by a scholastic argumentation or of waiting for a reply from Rome. The Bavarian prelates soon assembled a national council (870) in the presence of Louis the German. What took place in this pseudo-council, the nature of the arguments employed by the bishops of Passau, of Salzburg, and of Freising against the Bishop of Moravia and Pannonia, we know from authentic letters. Imperturbable even when struck and slapped in the face,³⁰ Methodius exasperated his adversaries. Pope John VIII, in one of his letters, says that one day the Bishop of Passau, Ermenrich, was seen to enter the council's meeting-place in riding-dress, a whip in his hand, and to attack the Bishop of Pannonia, intending to strike him in the face. The other bishops stopped him in time.³¹ In short, Methodius was thrown into a prison that was open to all the inclemencies of the weather and there, for two years, suffered horribly.³² But this did not prevent their sending to Rome a formal denunciation, charging Methodius with two offenses: the introduction of a new tongue into the liturgy, and the omission, from the recitation of the Creed, of the word *Filioque*, which the whole West had adopted at that period.

We have now reached the year 872. Pope Adrian II was

²⁹ Lapôtre, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

³⁰ *Colaphis affligentes*, Jaffé, I, 2976.

³¹ *In episcoporum concilium tractum equino flagello percuteres, nisi prohiberis ab aliis*. Letter of John VIII to Ermenrich of Passau. *Neues Archiv.*, V, 303; Jaffé, I, 2977.

³² *Sub divo, acerrima hiemis immanitate*. Letter of John VIII to Ermenrich. *Neues Archiv.*, V, 303; Jaffé, I, 2978.

succeeded by John VIII. Once again Rome, less exacting than the pretended defenders of its rights, decided in favor of the Bishop of Moravia and Pannonia. However, it asked him to employ the Slavonic tongue only in his sermons.⁸³ What were the circumstances that, six years later, made Methodius think he was authorized to celebrate mass in the national language? We do not know. We simply know that, when denounced for so doing and summoned to Rome by Pope John VIII, he so justified his conduct that the Supreme Pontiff, testifying to Methodius' perfect orthodoxy, solemnly declared in a letter to King Swatopluk (June, 878) that there was no objection to having the mass sung in Slavonic, since God was the author of that tongue as well as of any other.⁸⁴

Moravia under Swatopluk

Moravia was then near the height of its power. Swatopluk, after being supported by the Germans in dethroning his uncle, broke away from them. His empire soon stretched to the north over all Bohemia, to the south over all Pannonia as far as the Danube. This great man seems to have been endowed with a remarkable political sense. He grasped the importance of Methodius' work for maintaining the national independence and the autonomy of his race. It appears that his perspicacity penetrated still farther. As if he had an intuition of the preponderant part which the papacy would play in the organization of the Middle Ages, Swatopluk decided to place his empire under the immediate dependence of the Holy See, thus withdrawing his state from the eventual domination of any other suzerainty. History should retain the name of the Slav monarch who was the first Christian ruler to place his people under the direct vassalage of the Roman pontiff. Moreover, we know that

⁸³ Jaffé, I, 2970, 2975-2980.

⁸⁴ *PL*, CXXVI, 906.

the chief significance of this act was that of a great example. The Moravian empire did not survive the great Swatopluk. The very year of his death (894), Moravia was attacked on the West by the imperial troops and on the east by the Hungarian hordes, and was torn internally by the rivalries of the two sons of the defunct king, Moimir II and Swatopluk II. Soon after this it became the prey of Hungary and Bohemia.

On the very eve of this national catastrophe, the work of the saintly Bishop was stricken by an even greater misfortune, so it seems, because it appeared to affect the religious future of the whole Slav race. It was in consequence of a most commonplace incident that the result of so many efforts was going to be a failure.

The German party had not disarmed. In his determination to exclude the liturgical use of the Slavonic tongue, an unworthy prelate of German origin, Wiching by name, who by intrigue had become bishop of Passau, went so far as to resort to forgery. By scheming that would take too long to recount,³⁵ Wiching succeeded in substituting for the genuine letter of John VIII a forged letter, which absolutely forbade the Slavonic liturgy, ordered the return to all the rites and practices of the Latin Church, exempted Wiching from the jurisdiction of Methodius, and commissioned him to see to the execution of the papal letters in Moravia. At first the imposture was a complete success. Swatopluk, cleverly circumvented by Wiching, fell into the trap. For Methodius this was the beginning of a series of distressful humiliations and tribulations which were not definitely dissipated by a further letter of John VIII, a letter that was too vague, misunderstood, and not well interpreted. In 885, the apostle of Moravia rendered his soul to God, fearing the worst calamities for his work. In fact, a year later Pope Stephen V, likewise deceived by Wiching, who had been appointed to succeed Methodius, explicitly forbade the

³⁵ See the detail in Lapôtre, *op. cit.*, pp. 136 ff.

Slavonic liturgy, basing his proscription on the forged letter of John VIII. For a period of four centuries the popes, victims of the same error, continued to interdict the use of the national tongue in the Slav liturgy. It was not until the beginning of the thirteenth century that they partly revoked the prohibitions, when the Register of John VIII's letters, brought from Monte Cassino to the papal library, enabled them to establish the criminal trickery of Wiching.

Despite all difficulties, the work of the apostles of Moravia had been fruitful to an extraordinary degree. The Russian historian Hilferding says that no hero of his nation did more than Cyril and Methodius for the future of the Slav races. They gave a fixity to the language now spoken by millions of men. Their civilizing influence was also extended to the whole race; they exercised this influence at a time when, with the distinction between the various peoples not yet well marked, it was able easily to make itself felt in the whole great Slav family. A history of the Church should take note of the fact that almost all the Christians who, in the Slav world, are attached to the Roman Church, go back, directly or indirectly, to the Church of Moravia. Bohemia, whose Duke Borziwoi, brother-in-law of Swatopluk, was converted by St. Methodius, Poland, which received from Moravian fugitives after the fall of their country the first rudiments of the faith, and Hungary, where the influences of the Bohemian and Polish missionaries was preponderant, owe to these Latin origins their escape from the Byzantine influence which would lead the other Slav nations into the Greek Schism.

The Russians

Early in the tenth century, while Moravia was disappearing from the political map of Europe, partitioned between the Bohemians and the Hungarians, a new center of Slav power

was founded more to the north and east, in the middle of a vast plain that was beginning to be called the country of the Rous, or Russia. The enterprising conqueror Oleg, son of Ruric, after taking by assault the city of Kieff on the Dnieper, said: "Let Kieff be the mother of Russian cities."³⁶ He who spoke thus was a Scandinavian, of the tribe of the Vareghi. But the nation whose capital he established was indeed a Slav nation. It seemed to be in the destiny of this race that it should find organization and unity only at the hands of men of foreign race. Who brought about the unity of the Slavs in the Balkan peninsula if not the Bulgarian Boris, and the empire of Moravia if not the Macedonians Cyril and Methodius? The father of Oleg was Ruric of the tribe of the Vareghi. He it was who made Russia. That nation had special need of a foreign and dominating element if it be true, as has been said, that the vast, bare plain it inhabits, adding its influence to that of the race, inclined the imagination of this people "to dreams vague and empty like itself, rather than to mighty conceptions and living images."³⁷

The Vareghi, like the Slavs, were pagans. Upon mingling together, the dominant tribe and the vast nation merged their religions. The Scandinavian god Thor became identical with the Slav god Perun. But Christianity was spread among the people from the very beginning. When, under Igor the successor of Oleg, the Russians concluded a treaty with the emperor of the East, "some ascended the hill of Perun and performed the vows in the ancient way; others went to the chapel of St. Elias, and laid their hands on the Gospel."³⁸ But the leaders were refractory to Christian teaching. Says Nestor, the old Russian chronicler: "When one of the warriors of the great Prince decided to become a Christian, he was not prevented,

³⁶ Rambaud, *History of Russia*, I, 49. "Rous" was the name of a band of Vareghi who penetrated into Russia about 862, invited, it is said, by the Slavs.

³⁷ Fouillée, *Esquisse psychologique des peuples européens*, p. 396.

³⁸ Rambaud, *op. cit.*, I, 52.

but he was laughed at." Olga, the widow of Iror, was baptized at Constantinople in 955, but her influence did not have any religious consequences among the great ones of Russia.

Conversion of Vladimir

The movement of conversion was brusque and complete, at least in appearance, under Vladimir in 998. Russia was tortured by a religious crisis. From the merging of the religion of the Slavic gods with that of the Scandinavian gods there arose a practical skepticism, against which the deeply religious soul of the Slavs protested. Where was the true religion to be found? Vladimir made an inquiry. His agents' description of the religious majesty of the functions at St. Sophia and the memory of his grandmother Olga removed his doubts. He resolved to become a Christian. But the proud Vareghus was not going to "beg for baptism." He determined to win it by conquest. To the Greek emperors Basil and Constantine he sent envoys to declare that, unless they would give him the hand of their sister Anna, he would march upon Constantinople. The emperors laid down the condition that Vladimir must be baptized. He received baptism and brought with him from Constantinople, besides his wife, some Christian priests, relics of the saints, and Church vestments, as one might carry off captives, as one makes off with booty after a victory. Then he had the statue of Perun publicly whipped and cast into the river.

From the old accounts gathered by Nestor and perhaps already altered by popular imagination, it is hard to judge what was the real character of him who has been called the Clovis of Russia. Like the Clovis of France, he seems not immediately to have divested himself of barbarism. Once he became a Christian, he thought he might command baptism for his people, as he would have commanded a military maneuver for his army. As we read in the old annals, "then, by Vladimir's order,

all the Kievans plunged into the waters of the . . . stream, while the Greek priests standing on the bank with Vladimir read the baptismal service.”³⁹

Amid this scene, where Greek priests baptized by order a race that lined up at the word of command, we regret not to see, in the new Clovis’ entourage, a St. Remigius, a St. Clotilda, and a St. Genevieve, living models of the purest and gentlest Christian virtues.

Yet it appears that subsequently grace accomplished wonders in the soul of the converted king. Nestor marvels at this inner transformation. We see the monarch distributing his goods to the churches and to the poor; he was faithful to his Greek wife, he was no longer fond of war. He disliked to exercise severity even to punish criminals, and the bishops were obliged to remind him of his duties to justice. Says Leroy-Beaulieu; “There is between the Russian temperament and Russian nature, as manifested in the opposition of the seasons, a likeness not easily to be denied. Both are immoderate, both easily rush from one extreme to another.”⁴⁰ Vladimir founded schools where the children of the common people studied the Scriptures in the Slavonic translation of St. Cyril and St. Methodius. But they had to be won to this sort of study. Their parents tried to turn them from it, looking upon writing as a kind of sorcery. Belief in soothsayers and sorcerers persisted for a long while among the people. In the twelfth century we find it still mingled with the practices of the Christian faith.

Jaroslav the Russian Charlemagne

The Russian Charlemagne, Jaroslav the Great, at the beginning of the eleventh century completed the work of the Russian Clovis. Jaroslav’s legislative work is remarkable. He drew

³⁹ Rambaud, *op. cit.*, I, 60.

⁴⁰ Leroy-Beaulieu, *L’empire des tsars*, I, 174.

up the first code of his nation, the Rouskaia Pravda (the Russian *law* or *truth*). Throughout it bears a Scandinavian imprint. This legislation sanctions the judgment of God, legal duels, money composition or *wergheld*, which the Russians call *vira*. Jaroslav's political success was still more important. He brought his dynasty into the family of Christian rulers, marrying his sister to Casimir king of Poland, one of his daughters to Harold the Brave king of Norway, another to Henry I king of France, the third to Andrew I king of Hungary.

But Russia remained cut off from the West. Christianity and civilization came to it from Byzantium, not from Rome. Therein was its weakness. It was from Byzantium that it received its intellectual culture. "The numerous schools endowed by Vladimir and Jaroslav were founded by Greeks, after Byzantine models. This is what one of her writers calls by the name of 'the first of her intellectual bondages.' " ⁴¹ Also from Byzantium she received the type of her social organization. "The first social type which civilization held out to the young Russian Empire was the autocracy of the Lower Empire, a state without political rights, ruled by Imperial Omnipotence, aided by a close hierarchy of functionaries and employees." ⁴² Lastly, it was from Byzantium that she received the form of her Church. The first personnel of her priesthood and her episcopate were Greeks. But, in the Byzantine Church, the tendency to schism was widespread. When the day of the open declaration of the schism comes, the Church of Russia lets herself be drawn into it as if the act were quite of her own accord.

Poland

Very different were the circumstances leading to the conversion of Poland. The slow labor of preaching the Gospel, begun there by exiled Moravians among the popular classes, ac-

⁴¹ Kaveline, quoted by Leroy-Beaulieu, *op. cit.*, I, 231.

⁴² *Ibid.*

complished real progress only at the close of the tenth century, following the marriage of Duke Mieczyslaw (or Mieszko) in 965 to a young Bohemian princess, Dombrowka (or Dobrawa). She was a daughter of King Boleslaus and niece of St. Wenceslaus.⁴³ Dobrawa (the Good) was the good angel of Poland. By her gentleness and untiring condescension, she succeeded in touching the heart of her husband, who was still involved in the errors of paganism. Our most important testimony as to these events comes from Dithmar of Merseburg.⁴⁴ He relates that Dobrawa began by performing most austere penances to obtain her husband's conversion. Seeing that her manner of life merely frightened him and made Christianity odious to him, the devout princess changed her tactics. She determined to conquer him by kindness, amiably yielding to all his requests whenever her conscience would allow. One day, however, it seemed that she had really gone too far. She had consented to eat meat on a fast day. Says the gentle chronicler at this point: "You have now learned her sin, O kind reader. Learn also the fruit of her good will. She labored with kindness for her husband's conversion and she was heard by the goodness of her Creator, whose unspeakable mercy stirred reflection in the heart of a fiery enemy who, obedient to the remonstrances of his wife, rejected the poison of his inherited unbelief and washed away his original sin in the waters of his baptism."⁴⁵

Mieszko's successor was Boleslaus the Mighty (Chrobry), who reigned from 992 to 1025. He assured the complete triumph of Christianity by calling into his states the Benedictines and the Camaldolese, who spread about them a serious Christian life. From that moment two traits distinguished the

⁴³ Moeller, *Histoire du Moyen Age*, p. 792 note.

⁴⁴ Dithmar (or Thietmar) bishop of Merseburg, born in 976, rendered a most valuable service to the history of the Middle Ages by the publication of his *Chronicon*. See *MGH*, V, 723 ff.

⁴⁵ Dithmar, *Chronicon*, IV, 35; *MGH*, Vol. V.

Church of Poland: a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and an earnest loyalty to the Holy See. The famous canticle to the Blessed Virgin, attributed to St. Adalbert of Prague, stirred the enthusiasm of the Poles. As is well known, "the close union between Poland and the papal court has remained one of the special marks of this people's history."⁴⁶

Later on, amid countless misfortunes, caused not simply by the weaknesses of her constitutional régime, Poland became the invincible bulwark of Europe against invasions and gave evidence of a vitality and nobility that have few examples in history. Without rashness we may attribute the merit of this to those two traits of her faith. Alfred Fouillée, an author by no means prejudiced in favor of the Church, writes as follows: "Russia and Poland are of the same race, but they have opposite religions and civilizations. It was from Byzantium the former received her religion, preached by Greek missionaries; the latter received Roman Catholicism, preached by missionaries who came from Rome; . . . whence there came a double current of civilization; in one case, Byzantine and sterile; in the other case, Graeco-Roman and infinitely fertile. So true is it that moral and social influences are superior to ethnical influences."⁴⁷

The Hungarians

The Hungarians (or Magyars) belonged to an entirely different race. They were the very ones who, by seizing Moravia and pushing their incursions from all sides, had split the Slav world into several fragments, of which Russia and Poland were the chief ones. They entered the Catholic Church at the same time as the Poles, at the close of the tenth century. No nation was more terrible in battle; but none developed a more

⁴⁶ E. Denis, in the *Histoire générale*, I, 726.

⁴⁷ Fouillée, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and a more knightly loyalty to the supreme pontiff.

The Magyar duke who, at the end of the ninth century, came down from the Carpathians and invaded Pannonia, was said to be sprung from the noble and ferocious Attila.⁴⁸ Five centuries before, so it was said, while Attila, not satisfied with the vast empire he had carved out with his sword in eastern Europe, turned his steps toward the Eternal City, a heavenly angel appeared to him and said: "Hear what the Lord Jesus Christ commands you: Enter not into the Holy City where the bodies of my Apostles rest. Turn back, and some day, at Rome itself, as a reward for your obedience, I will give to one of your descendants the crown of a kingdom that will last forever." This was the crown which Duke Almos with his 20,000 warriors came to find in the land which his ancestor Attila had conquered long before. The country occupied by the Magyars of Duke Almos thenceforth took the name of Magyaria or Hungary. With them they brought the religion of their ancestors, the worship of the god Isten, whom they called more especially the *god of the Magyars*, and of several secondary divinities, the principal of which was the god of war, Hadur, a belief in fairies, and the practice of divination and sorcery.

In times of peace, each tribe was independent. But in time of war, they elected a chief. Gathered about a sacred cup, the chieftains of the seven tribes, with their left arm extended before them, opened an artery with their dagger and, while their blood poured into the cup, they took a terrible oath: "Thus may pour out to the last drop the blood of anyone who revolts against the chief chosen by the tribes! Thus may pour out the blood of the chief if he violates the conditions of our pact!" Then the chosen leader, upon his horse, brandished his saber

⁴⁸ The Hungarians, in their traditions, give Attila a very noble and honorable character.

to the four cardinal points, in this way signifying that he would defend his country from whatever side it might be attacked.⁴⁹

Conversion of Duke Geza

A century after the occupation of Hungary by the Magyar forces, on Christmas Day, 973, Duke Geza, a descendant of Duke Almos, received baptism from the hands of St. Adalbert of Prague, along with five thousand of his warriors. This conversion was in very large part the work of his wife Sarolta, daughter of Gyula duke of Transylvania, who had been baptized at Constantinople and brought his daughter up in the Christian religion. Faith in Christ had not at all extinguished the native and somewhat savage energies of the young princess. The Hungarians liked to see this fearless amazon "subdue the most restive horses without bit or saddle, empty the foaming cups, and cast herself into the battle, where her valor equaled that of the most dauntless warriors."⁵⁰ She had a considerable influence over her people and over her husband.⁵¹ The Duke, himself impressed by the grandeur of the doctrines and moral teaching of Christianity, allowed his wife to build churches and to call Christian missionaries to Hungary.

A saint, of gentle and pious soul, accomplished the work which the valiant amazon had begun. St. Adalbert of Prague who later died a martyr of the faith, near Königsberg in 997, slain with a lance by an idolatrous priest, was the son of a nobleman of Bohemia. In childhood he was especially consecrated to the Blessed Virgin. Raised to the see of Prague at the age of twenty-seven, endowed with an earnest zeal for the

⁴⁹ *Gesta Hungarorum*, VI. Quoted by Horn, *Saint Étienne de Hongrie*, pp. 12 f. The custom of brandishing the sword to the four cardinal points is preserved in the ceremonial of the coronation of the kings of Hungary.

⁵⁰ Horn, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁵¹ *Totum regnum viri manu tenebat*, says De Sarolta, the biographer of St. Adalbert of Prague. *Acta sanctorum*, April, Vol. III.

glory of God, but filled with a great mistrust of himself, he determined to entrust his episcopal see to an auxiliary, thinking himself incapable of winning to God his untutored Czech fellow-countrymen. He went to Rome and there retired to the monastery of St. Alexis, where he led a life of penance and prayer. A deputation of Bohemians and the Pope's order induced him to return to his country. He became the apostle, not only of Bohemia, but also of Hungary and Prussia.⁵²

The conversion of the people was the work of Pilgrim of Passau, of the monk Wolfgang, and of some other Greek and Latin missionaries.

St. Stephen of Hungary

Six years after the baptism of her husband, Sarolta gave birth to a son who at baptism received the name of Stephen and whom the Church would place in the number of the saints. The zeal displayed by St. Stephen of Hungary in building churches and monasteries, his vigorous promptness in suppressing an attempt at revolt by the old followers of paganism, the prudence and moderation which he practiced in all things in the government of his country, the noble simplicity with which he rendered justice to his subjects and instructed the poor,⁵³ the spirit of justice and loyalty which he brought to his diplomatic relations with other peoples, his filial piety toward the Blessed Virgin, to whom he vowed his kingdom and whom he liked to call the *Great Lady of the Hungarians*, the remarkable counsels which he drew up for the instruction of his son, justifies us in placing him among the greatest Christian kings, not far from St. Louis king of France. But his two chief titles of glory are his legislative work and the direction he gave to the general policy of Hungary.

⁵² On St. Adalbert of Prague, see *Acta sanctorum*, April, Vol. III.

⁵³ Pope Sylvester II said: "I am apostolic, but King Stephen, by the grace of Christ, is apostle. *Ego sum apostolicus; ille vero, merito Christi, est apostolus.*

Stephen himself said: "Let the laws and traditions of our fathers be something sacred for us, because it is difficult for a people to exist and to continue if it disowns those who have gone before." For him, however, this cultivation of tradition seems to have been merely the condition for a more assured and progressive advance. By some he has been reproached, whereas he has been honored by others, for resolving to advance beyond his age. In the constitution that he drew up for his country, Stephen, whenever he judged it fitting, did not fear to depart from the practices most cherished by his race. Courageously and inexorably he forbade duels and private warfare. Whoever should draw his sword to avenge a personal offense would be condemned to perish by the sword.

He made notable alterations in the constitution of his country. Out of what had been merely a sort of military power, he made a monarchy. But at the same time he rejected the ancient conception of monarchy, which absorbed into the state every individual initiative. Through the development of the institution of the *comitats*, or autonomous provinces, he established a wise administrative and social decentralization. He wished that in each province the speech, the customs, and the manner of dress should be respected. "Feeble is the state," he said, "which has only one tongue and uniform customs."⁵⁴ Between the high nobility and the common people he favored the formation of a lesser nobility, easily accessible, that of the knights, from whom he hoped for much in the defense of the public liberties and the national independence. He wanted the royalty to be elective, but maintained in the same family. He intended that foreigners should enjoy extensive liberties in his states and that they should be called, not strangers or foreigners, but guests, *hospites*. To facilitate the relations between his subjects and other nations, he founded at Jerusalem, Rome, Constan-

⁵⁴ *Unius linguae uniusque moris regnum imbecille et fragile est. Sancti Stephani Decret., LI, Monit. IV.*

tinople, and Ravenna hospices intended to receive Hungarian travelers. He professed absolute regard for private property. No one could be deprived of his possessions, even to the advantage of the state, by a process of confiscation. In case of desertion, or treason, or of lese majesty, the criminal's property would pass to his children "that the innocent son might not be deprived of his patrimony on account of the guilty father."

Many of the reforms of this great lawmaker did not have the result which they seemed to promise. Some of them were not well enough understood; in the case of others, the people were not advanced enough to support them. It is a just cause of pride for Hungary that one of its kings, and for the Church that one of her saints, nine centuries ago proclaimed principles of so lofty a moral and social import.

Through the connections of St. Stephen's maternal grandfather, Gyula the duke of Transylvania, who had been converted at Constantinople, and through the missionaries whom his mother Sarolta had invited to come, Christian Hungary at first found itself orientated in the direction of the Byzantine Church. The Christian understanding of the saintly King made him see that the full truth and the future were in the direction of Rome. He openly turned in that direction. Pope Sylvester II, who perceived what eminent services might be rendered to Christianity by a Catholic kingdom located in the eastern part of Europe, placed the royal crown on Stephen's head in the year 1000, bestowed upon him the title of *apostolic*, and granted him exceptional privileges regarding the organization of dioceses and the conferring of benefices.

Hungary the Bulwark of Europe

The destinies of Hungary were determined. Throughout the Middle Ages the Hungarian nation, steadfast at its post of combat, was the bulwark of Europe against the Tartar and Turkish invasions. "For Westerners, what should be upper-

most is gratitude for the services which Hungary rendered to civilization by placing its body across the path of barbarism.”⁵⁵ Says Michelet: “When shall we pay our debt of gratitude to this blessed people, the savior of the West?”

By the conversion of Hungary the formation of Christian Europe was completed. After a thousand years of effort, not only was paganism vanquished throughout Europe; it was also reached in the other parts of the world. Christianity entered Africa by way of Roman Africa, Egypt, and Nubia;⁵⁶ it spread in Asia as far as the island of Socotra, Ceylon, and the Malabar coast; a few missions were to be found at intervals across Tartary to the very heart of China;⁵⁷ by way of Iceland, which became Christian in the year 1000, and by Greenland, it soon reached America.⁵⁸

While bishops and missionary monks were laboring at this great expansion, the popes and the Christian princes did not remain inactive. The idea of a vast confederation of the converted nations had taken form, the temporal domain of the Holy See was legally constituted, Charlemagne had founded the Holy Empire, feudalism was born, Pope St. Nicholas I had proclaimed the Christian law of the new society, and, after violent blows that shook the See of St. Peter mightily, a German prince resumed the work of Charlemagne. These are the facts we must now set forth.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Sayous, *Histoire générale des Hongrois*.

⁵⁶ Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome*, pp. 182 ff.

⁵⁷ The famous stone of Si-ngan-fu, discovered in 1625, leaves no doubt as to the preaching of the Gospel in China in the seventh century. Cf. Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*.

⁵⁸ Gaffarel, *Études sur les rapports de l'Amérique et de l'Ancien Continent avant Colomb*; Gravier, *Découverte de l'Amérique par les Normands au X^e siècle*.

⁵⁹ On the origin of the Slavic Churches and liturgy, see Petrovic, O.F.M., *Disquisitio historica in originem usus slavici idiomatis in liturgia apud Slavos ac praecipue Croatos*. Petrovic's conclusions, in accord with those of Lapôtre, have been questioned. See Zeiller in the *Revue des questions historiques*, July 1, 1909, p. 374. On the Bulgarian Church in particular, see Vailhé, “Formation de l'Église bulgare” in the *Échos d'Orient*, March, 1911, pp. 80-89, and May, 1911, pp. 152-161.

PART III

THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

CHAPTER XI

The Formation of the Papal States (741-757)

THE task imposed upon the Roman pontiffs by the conversion of so many nations was overwhelming. To maintain their contact by ceaseless correspondence with the missionaries and with the converted rulers, to solve the most unexpected cases of conscience arising from altogether novel situations, to pass final judgment in ecclesiastical disputes, even to intervene, at the request of rulers and of nations, in the conflicts of private rights, public law, and international law: such was the mission which the papacy had to assume after the first conversions of the barbarian races. St. Nicholas I and St. Gregory VII later on set forth and to some extent codified this mission of the papacy of the Middle Ages;¹ to say that they inaugurated this mission is to contradict the genuine facts of history. It was determined by providential circumstances and by social needs which the popes neither created nor foresaw.

Moreover, such a mission was no less delicate for them than it was formidable. The lofty impartiality that should rightly be expected from that supreme jurisdiction implied a moral independence difficult to reconcile with the political dependence from which the conservative loyalty of the bishops of Rome

¹ Concerning the work of St. Nicholas I, Henri Martin, in his *Histoire de France* (4th ed., II, 455), writes: "The papacy had never tried anything so daring: the whole Church discipline was upset for the sake of an altogether new despotism. Popular approval ratified a usurpation that acted in the name of justice and Christian morality." The whole history of the popes, as we have been relating it according to authentic documents, protests against such a declaration. In the *Vie de saint Nicolas I^{er}* by Jules Roy (pp. xxx-xxxiii), see the enumeration of the chief facts proving that the supreme authority of the popes was exercised among the converted barbarian nations from the very outset.

did not wish to withdraw. The situation became most critical when the duties of their position made it necessary for them to take a stand for or against the emperors of the East, their official rulers, for or against the Ostrogoths, the Lombards, or any other nation at whose mercy their temporal domain did in fact find itself. The exercise of the popes' spiritual jurisdiction, which came to them from Christ, as also the accomplishment of their civilizing mission, which they held from the confidence of the peoples, required their territorial independence.

But what sword could guarantee this territorial independence? To put the sword into the hands of the pope or into the hands of any king, was to fall back into the danger that they wished to avoid. A powerful protector, in very high station, who would make himself the temporal defender of the Church, not by the title of king, but by a semi-sacred title which he would hold from the pope himself, which would be regulated, in its exercise, by a solemn pact and which the confederation of the Christian nations would confirm: such was the solution.

This was the whole conception of the Holy Roman Empire. The popes and the bishops of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, in all probability, did not envisage this ideal. Certainly there is no evidence that would lead us to suppose so. Neither St. Gregory, surprised at finding himself a temporal prince upon taking possession of the Holy See, nor St. Avitus greeting in Clovis the future emperor of the West, nor St. Leander celebrating at the Council of Toledo the fraternity of Christian peoples, had a clear vision of the Holy Empire. A concurrence of events, that the papacy and the episcopate underwent rather than provoked, realized this work, which continued, so to speak, in three different periods. Under Stephen II, the papal state was constituted as the nucleus around which the new world would be organized. Under St. Leo III, the Empire was established in the person of Charlemagne. Later, beginning in the tenth century, almost the whole of

feudalism was arranged hierarchically under the double supreme authority of the pope and the emperor.

The People of Rome

If we wish to find, outside the multiple and anonymous causes that gradually brought about the temporal independence of the Holy See, some human agency aware of this great work, we must consider the people of Rome.

A recent historian,² basing his conclusions upon the scholarly labors of Duchesne, says:

The popes of the eighth century, who came to Rome from the most diverse provinces, some Italians, others Greeks,³ still others Syrians, called to the supreme pontificate at an advanced age and exercising their power for a short period of a few years, seem to have too easily accepted the *status quo*. . . . On the other hand not enough attention has been given to the part taken by the people of Rome in these events, that people over whom the pope was the religious shepherd but who did not cease having their own political aspirations and accordingly exerted pressure upon the line of conduct of the papacy.

Since Rome had ceased to be the center of an empire, it no longer contained that immense cosmopolitan throng, made up of provincials and freed men, that the conquest of the world ceaselessly brought within its walls. Here, as elsewhere, a new generation had arisen, invigorated in the strifes and trials that accompanied the fall of the Empire. Rome was no longer the city of the Caesars; it remained the city of the Prince of the Apostles; and, in a period when religious thought excelled any other thought, it was still an enviable superiority to possess within its walls the tomb of St. Peter and the see of his successors. The Romans of Rome soon witnessed a new influx of foreigners, coming from distant countries where the Roman eagles had never penetrated. These people were not merely pilgrims; they

² Moeller, *Histoire du Moyen Age*, pp. 497 ff.

³ "In the course of a century and a half, thirteen Greek popes governed the Latin Church." Diehl, *Étude sur l'administration byzantine dans l'exarchat de Ravenne*, p. 159.

were also foreign colonies, permanently settled around the Basilica of St. Peter—Saxons, Franks, Frisians, Lombards—⁴ who attested by their presence the extent of this new empire of souls, which was equally as precious as the other.

Furthermore, along with the faithful, there poured in donations in every form, but especially in land, donations which made the Prince of the Apostles the largest landowner of Italy, with patrimonies no less extensive in Sicily, Corsica, in the Alpine region, and even in Gaul. The pope had the free disposal of the income from these patrimonies; but it was the people of Rome that derived the chief advantage from them. Most of the expenses for the needs of public worship, the construction and repair of churches and shrines, the manufacture of sacred utensils, furnished labor and wages for a whole population of artisans. Upon the treasury of the Church fell also the relief of the poorest, who received therefrom regular food allotments.

But, more and more, the pope, as a good shepherd, could not neglect other needs of his flock. He assumed a considerable part of the administrative services of Rome: the maintenance and repair of the city's fortifications, the care of highways and aqueducts, the provisioning of the markets, the protection of the lowly against oppression by imperial officials. All these occupations were very expensive and required a great amount of attention,⁵ as St. Gregory the Great remarked when complaining that his Apostolic See was assailed by this growing flood of secular affairs. The Church of Rome did not yet exercise any of the prerogatives of sovereignty, but it was already bearing all the obligations of it.

We can surmise the enthusiastic devotedness with which the people of Rome surrounded so beneficent an authority. And we can understand the indignation with which they witnessed the violent moves undertaken by the emperors against the person of their shepherd. That indignation was not able always to remain passive. In the presence of the Lombard peril, the inhabitants of the cities had of necessity again taken up the military profession, of which the Romans of the decline had lost the habit. City militias were everywhere organized;

⁴ These four *scholae* of Germanic origin formed the *Borgo* of St. Peter, located outside the boundaries of the city.

⁵ Diehl, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

at Rome it was the *exercitus romanus*, with its twelve *scholae* corresponding to the twelve sections of the city. This military revolution was a new and considerable step on the path of political autonomy. Of course the army obeyed the dukes and military tribunes sent or appointed by the emperor; but, following the iconoclast decrees, when the imperial officers decided to resort to acts of violence against the pope, the inhabitants drove them out, by one stroke freeing Rome and the papacy. They grouped themselves around the pope under native dukes and tribunes. They became the defenders of orthodoxy and of St. Peter who is its guardian.

Therefore, according to a conception familiar to the Middle Ages, incarnating the institution in its patron, they came to consider the Prince of the Apostles as the prince of the Romans; the Roman people was considered the special people of St. Peter.⁶

The Holy Roman Empire

Then it was that appeared in the letters of the popes to the Christian princes, as also in various other documents of the period, altogether novel expressions to designate the duchy of Rome and the patrimonies of the Holy See. Rome, the duchy around it, and agricultural colonies dependent on it in Italy and beyond, all are called the *Respublica romana*, the *Respublica Romanorum*, the *Sancta Respublica*.

"The word *Respublica* has a curious history. By itself, it means the state, consequently the empire. . . . But the epithet *holy* which the pope adds to it is perhaps more than a mere chancery formality: *Sancta Respublica* is not just the same as *Respublica* pure and simple. In time, the expression becomes more and more involved and complicated: we find *Sancta Respublica romana*, or *Sancta Respublica Italiae*. It would be rash to regard these expressions as exact definitions, because

⁶ *Sancti Petri peculiaris populus*. This expression recurs again and again in the letters of Pope Gregory III to Charles Martel, and of Pope Stephen II to Pepin. See Jaffé, *Monumenta carolina*, *Codex Carolinus*, pp. 14, 16, 17, 58, etc. *PL*, XCVIII, 66, 68. Cf. col. 106, 120, 248, 262.

the men who spoke thus did not precisely grasp what their words signified. They felt that something new was about to take place, but they did not see it; they were gropingly feeling their way in the dark; their speech was obscure like the things.”⁷

Who was the real sovereign of this *Respublica*? It was the Apostle St. Peter. The popes and the princes are quite agreed on this point. When Gregory wrote to Liutprand, demanding back four fortresses that had been taken from him, he makes his claim in the name of St. Peter.⁸ When the Lombard King returned the Sutri fortress to the Holy See, he declared that he was making his donation to the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul.⁹ Stephen II goes farther. In calling Pepin the Short to his aid, he employs a celebrated rhetorical personification in which he has St. Peter come down from heaven; he words his letter as though it were dictated by the Prince of the Apostles; and, after the campaign, the Frankish King replies to the envoys of the Emperor of the East that he has fought only for St. Peter and for the remission of his own sins. Says Duchesne: “I do not think it was all merely an oratorical fiction. It was in this manner that the pope should have spoken to his world. Assuredly he had the right to do so. And substantially it was in this manner the Romans themselves understood him. They felt that, in the crises that were developing, they had more to expect from the pope and from St. Peter than from the distant and not very sympathetic emperor of Constantinople.”¹⁰

If, indeed, the pope had the right to govern that state, it was

⁷ *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, Dec. 15, 1886, pp. 874 f.

⁸ *Quatuor castella Beato Petro erepta*, Jaffé, 1734. When Liutprand made this donation, did he mean to withdraw the fortress of Sutri from the Emperor? We think not. But he constituted this fortress in a very special juridical condition; he made of it a *sacred land* in the Empire.

⁹ *Sutriense castrum Beatissimis Apostolis Petro et Paulo rex restituit atque donavit. Liber pontificalis*, I, 407.

¹⁰ Duchesne, *Les premiers temps de l'état pontifical*, pp. 28 f.

solely as legitimate successor and representative of St. Peter. But, thus viewed, his political situation was without comparison.

In theory, unquestionably the pope was a subject, for everyone is subject or sovereign, and in the Empire there was no sovereign but the emperor. But in reality the emperor did not appoint the pope; he did no more than ratify his election, which took place at Rome and was made by the Romans. . . . The authority he exercised did not come to him from the emperor. . . . The succession from St. Peter, the see of St. Peter, the authority of St. Peter—to these the “Apostolic lord” laid claim and these constituted his prestige. . . . In a period when people were not so jealous as now to draw the line between the spiritual and the temporal . . . he frequently mixed in worldly affairs, in the making of treaties, in the appointment of officials, in protecting the finances of the state, in undertakings of a governmental nature. . . . He took a hand in the political and even military affairs of Ravenna and Naples. . . . He even reached beyond the frontiers and spoke to the Visigoths, the Franks, the Anglo-Saxons, and the Bavarians.¹¹

But *the sacred domain* properly so called, *the States of St. Peter*, were, by the very force of things, restricted to the district about Rome. “Around the Apostolic holy place a sort of special environ was formed, its boundaries marked spontaneously, furnished by the frontier of the duchy of Rome as determined by the halting of the Lombard invasion.”¹²

Pope St. Zachary

Before Pepin the Short’s intervention, such was the political situation of the bishop of Rome, the head of the universal Church. We should not, therefore, be surprised at seeing, in the middle of the eighth century, Pope St. Zachary without any

¹¹ *Les premiers temps de l'état pontifical*, pp. 21–23.

¹² Duchesne, *ibid.*, pp. 23 f. See (p. 24) the detailed delimitation of the duchy of Rome.

contest exercise all the prerogatives of sovereignty. This mild and gentle Pontiff, who seemed to have no other policy than to live at peace with everybody,¹³ "governed the States of St. Peter, as they were called, with the same independence as that with which he governed his Church."¹⁴ Consecrated almost immediately after his election, he did not bother to obtain imperial confirmation. When the Lombards were threatening Rome or the exarchate of Ravenna, Zachary on his own motion, without consulting Constantinople, found it quite natural to negotiate a treaty with Liutprand before the walls of Rome. From the King he obtained the evacuation of the exarchate, and from his successor Ratchis the raising of the siege of Perugia. He was at no pains at all to consult the emperor in the administration of the duchy of Rome, the States of St. Peter, to which for ten years, according to the expression of the *Liber pontificalis*, he gave "an era of prosperous and joyous security,"¹⁵ such as had been unknown for a long time. It was this same mild and peaceful Pontiff who was the first to exercise an act of supreme jurisdiction over the legitimacy of kings.¹⁶ Men's personal qualities counted for little in that great movement which ended in the constitution of the papal sovereignty.

Aistulf the Lombard King

Shortly after St. Zachary's death, a violent outrage, which at first seemed likely to arrest the development of the authority of the bishops of Rome, on the contrary brought about the legal, official, and definite recognition of it and transformed

¹³ *Vir mitissimus atque suavis, omnique bonitate ornatus, tardus ad irascendum, nulli malum pro malo reddens, sed pius ac misericors. Liber Pontificalis*, I, 426.

¹⁴ Moeller, *Histoire du Moyen Age*, p. 503.

¹⁵ *Hujus denique temporibus in magna securitate et letitia populus a Deo illi commissus degens vixit. Lib. pont.*, I, 435.

¹⁶ See *infra* the consultation of Zachary on the legitimacy of Pepin the Short.

into an institution of public international law what had previously been merely a situation of fact. In like manner we see the heresies, attempting to shatter the traditional belief, actually bring about new precision in the dogma of the Church.

We know the political situation caused in Italy by the invasion of the Lombards. But henceforth Lombard Italy, which developed in the middle of the peninsula, is distinguished from Byzantine Italy which, day by day driven back and compressed by the expansion of the barbarian invaders, nevertheless still embraced the greater part of the littoral and, in the center, a few enclaves, the chief of which was the duchy of Rome. In 750, the Lombard King Aistulf (or Astolphe), who succeeded Ratchis the year before, thought the moment had come to profit by the powerlessness of the emperor of the East and to invade the Byzantine possessions. Was not the imperial army recruited from natives of the country? Were not the dukes elective? Had not the authority of the exarch lost all its prestige? Aistulf judged he could seize a territory that was almost without claimants. Although we have no historical document referring to this military campaign, it seems that Aistulf occupied the imperial positions between the Po, the Adriatic, and the Apennines. The exarch Eutychius fled at the first report of the taking of Ravenna. In 751, the Lombard King was installed in the palace of the imperial exarchs.¹⁷

But public opinion was moved when in June, 752, Aistulf's army, drunk with its success, threatened the duchy of Rome. The duchy of Rome was indeed still imperial territory, but it was also sacred territory, the untouchable domain of the Apostle St. Peter. Besides, the Romans had never liked the Lombard people. Neither the protection which their chiefs often gave to the supreme pontiffs nor the royal gifts they made to the states of St. Peter had been able to overcome the deep antip-

¹⁷ *Reg. Farf.*, no. 18, quoted by Duchesne, *Les premiers temps de l'état pontifical*, p. 35.

athy felt by the Romans toward those men with untrimmed beards and with strange attire, who were said to have a bad smell and to spread leprosy.¹⁸ There were no marriages between Romans and Lombards. This popular repulsion did not abate; on the contrary it grew sharper as the Lombards mingled more in Roman life. A rumor spread that Aistulf was intending to transfer his capital from Pavia to Rome. Popular exasperation was at its height.

Pope St. Stephen II

At this juncture Pope Zachary died (752). In the Church of St. Mary Major the people elected as his successor a man who, better than anyone else, was able to grasp the seriousness of the situation and to impress upon papal policy the orientation demanded by the events. It was the deacon Stephen, the second of that name to occupy the see of Peter.¹⁹ Stephen II was of Roman origin. Orphaned in childhood, he had been reared in the Lateran Palace, in the entourage of the popes. The *Liber pontificalis* sums up his character in a few very precise traits: "Energetic and zealous defender of the Churches of God and of the Christian people, determined preserver of the ecclesiastical traditions," the deacon Stephen was also possessed of a kindly and charitable soul, "fond of visiting the widows and orphans."²⁰

The new Pope's first care was to negotiate with Aistulf, as his predecessor had done with Liutprand and Ratchis, the ces-

¹⁸ *PL*, XCVIII, 256.

¹⁹ Jaffé, in his remarkable collection of the *Regesta pontificum*, is mistaken in reckoning as Stephen II one of this name who was elected but who died before being consecrated. He thus calls our pope Stephen III. This designation made by Jaffé has not been followed by Church historians. But we should recall this mistake so as to avoid confusion when consulting the *Regesta* of a pope named Stephen.

²⁰ *Amator ecclesiarum Dei . . . fortissimus etiam oculis sui cum Dei virtute defensor . . . traditionem etiam ecclesiarum firma stabilitate conservans . . . viduas et pupillos multo melius visitans. Lib. pont.*, I, 440.

sation of hostilities. A delegation, made up of deacon Paul, (brother of the Pope) and Ambrose the primicerius of the notaries, obtained from the Lombard King a forty years' truce. But in less than four months Aistulf, false to his oath,²¹ violated the truce and commanded the inhabitants of Rome to pay a personal tribute of one gold solidus for each person. The Roman people were angered at this. The Pope, to show the King that the interests which he was defending were not those of one nationality, but the general interests of the Church, sent to Aistulf two new ambassadors, this time chosen, not from the ranks of the Roman clergy, but from the clergy subject to the King of the Lombards: they were the abbot of Monte Cassino and the abbot of St. Vincent of Volturmo. Aistulf received them with insolence, and ordered them to return directly to their monasteries without going to Rome to make a report to the Pope.²²

The emperor of Constantinople, however, who was at that time Constantine Copronymus, finally decided to act. But his move, if not inspired by a complete ignorance of the gravity of the danger, was a most humiliating avowal of his weakness. The news of the failure of the embassy of the abbots of Monte Cassino and St. Vincent had scarcely reached Rome, when a messenger from the Emperor arrived there. He was an official of high rank, the *silentiarius* ²³ John, who came to implore the Pope to intervene with the Lombard King to halt his incursions. Stephen II attempted to disillusion the imperial ambassador as to the effectiveness of any diplomatic undertaking. To show the soundness of his opinion beyond the least question of doubt, he consented to have his brother Paul go with the

²¹ *In periurii incidens reatu. Lib. pont., I, 441 ; Jaffé, 2307.*

²² *Obtestans eos minime ad praeftatum sanctissimum papam declinari. Lib. pont., I, 442.*

²³ The *silentiarii* were at first the thirty officers of the imperial palace whose duty it was to maintain silence. Practically they had become departmental chiefs. The first *silentiarius* held the office of cabinet head.

silentiarius to Aistulf. After the foreseen failure of this new mission, in clear terms he notified the Emperor that, to stop the insolence of the Lombards, no means would be effective except the sending of an army to Italy.

However, consternation kept growing at Rome and became a veritable panic. Sinister rumors came from Ravenna. It was said that "the atrocious King of the Lombards, shaking like a lion, kept uttering the most terrible threats against the Romans; he spoke of cutting off the heads of all the inhabitants of Rome."²⁴

Deprived of all human succor, the holy Pontiff invited his people to turn to God by public prayers. Many processions and litanies were held. Says the Roman annalist, with great pomp were carried the most sacred *mysteries*, that is, the most precious relics and statues, and the *acheropite*²⁵ image of Christ. By this last expression we should probably understand the "Holy Face" preserved in the Lateran Church. When the procession reached St. Mary Major's, each person covered his head with ashes in sign of penance, and prayers were offered to God before the stational cross, at the foot of which was fastened a copy of the treaty violated by the King of the Lombards.²⁶

Yet the imperial army, asked for by the Pope from Emperor Constantine Copronymus, did not arrive.

Pepin the Short

Then it was that Stephen II resolved to turn to the Franks. His predecessors, Gregory III and Zachary, had already asked of Charles Martel, Pepin, and Carolman, that they should be-

²⁴ *Atrocissimus rex . . . fremens ut leo, pestiferas minas Romanis dirigere non desinebat, asserens omnes uno gladio jugulari. Lib. pont., I, 442.*

²⁵ *Cum sacratissima imagine . . . quae acheropsita nuncupatur. Lib. pont., I, 443.* This word *acheropsita* means "not touched by human hands."

²⁶ *Lib. pont., I, 443.*

come the pope's auxiliaries in the work of Christian civilization. The situation was now far graver and more important. In his first letter, which was brought to Pepin by a pilgrim, Stephen II sets forth to the Frankish prince the situation of the Church of Rome. Then, probably after receiving a favorable answer, he sent a second letter in which he said to Pepin: "Send some envoys to me to Rome, and I will set out with them to visit you." ²⁷

Pepin had a debt of gratitude to pay to the papacy. Thanks to the papacy he had been able, two years before, to carry out a political change required for the good of France. Says Einhard: "For a long time past, the family of the Merovingians gave no proof of any virtue. The ruler was satisfied with having long-flowing hair, and a long beard, with sitting upon his throne and issuing replies that had been dictated to him or even commanded by others." ²⁸ But, adds the *Annals of the Franks*, "in 751, Burchard bishop of Würzburg and Fulrad a priest were sent to Rome to Pope Zachary, to consult the Pontiff regarding those kings who possessed merely the name of kings without having any genuine royal power. The Pope replied that it was better that the one who held the authority should also have the title, and enjoined that Pepin should be made king." ²⁹ The annalist then proceeds to relate how, after Pepin's coronation by St. Boniface, archbishop and martyr of happy memory, the new King was raised on the throne according to the custom of the Franks, in the city of Soissons; the last of the Merovingians, Chilperic, was then confined in the monastery of St. Bertin at Saint Omer. The change of dynasties thus

²⁷ Jaffé, 2311.

²⁸ Einhard (Eginhard), *Vita Karoli*, chap. 1; *Historiens des Gaules*, V, 89.

²⁹ *Ann. Franc.*; *Hist. des Gaules*, V, 63. The authenticity of this consultation of Zachary, contested by Mury (*Rev. ques. hist.*, 1867), rests upon the evidence of four independent literary texts: the continuer of Fredegarius, the *Annales Francorum*, the *Vita Karoli*, and a text (dated 767), found by the Bollandists in 1886, the *Clausula de unctione Pippini*.

took place without any disturbance. Did the King of the Franks suspect that he would now have to settle, apropos of the temporal power of the popes, a similar case of conscience, namely, whether a long continuity of services can found a legitimacy of power and whether the abandonment of duties is not equivalent to abdication?

In any event, the emperor of Constantinople rid himself more and more of his duties of protection over the duchy of Rome and cast its whole burden upon the supreme pontiff. Almost at the same time that Bishop Chrodegang of Metz and Duke Autchar, the two envoys of Pepin the Short, reached Rome,³⁰ a Byzantine embassy, with John the silentiarius at its head, also arrived. Its mission was, not to inform the Pope of the proximate arrival of the much desired imperial army, but to implore Stephen II again to intervene with Aistulf in the Emperor's name, to obtain from him the return of Ravenna and the cities dependent upon it. On the other hand, the Frankish ambassadors invited the Sovereign Pontiff to visit King Pepin. It was the autumn of 753. After mature consideration, the wise and brave Pontiff took a resolve that at first alarmed his entourage; but he held to it with energy: to accept the invitation of the Frankish King, but first to appear in person before Aistulf at Pavia, accompanied by the two embassies. Vainly he was told of the snares which the perfidious Lombard King would surely lay for him, the danger of death to which he would be exposing himself. On October 14, 753—the *Liber pontificalis* expressly records this memorable date—the Sovereign Pontiff, accompanied by the imperial legate John the silentiarius, Chrodegang bishop of Metz, the Frankish Duke Autchar, and a suite of notables from Rome and neighboring cities, bade farewell to his people and set out. An immense

³⁰ Duke Autchar, so celebrated in the *Gestes* of the Middle Ages under the name of Oger or Ogier. His card games made the name popular.

crowd accompanied him for some time on the way, "weeping, sighing, and attempting to keep him back," say the papal Annals, because they foresaw the great dangers awaiting him at Pavia.⁸¹

Pope Stephen and Pepin

Aistulf, informed of the Pope's approach, sent a deputation to meet him and to caution him not to say a word about the Lombard conquests in Italy. Stephen took no notice of the admonition. When he reached Pavia, he set forth his complaints both in the name of the Empire and in the name of the Church. Aistulf, though perhaps not much intimidated by the imperial envoy, was otherwise impressed by the attitude of the two Frankish ambassadors, who were able to back up the Pontiff's discourse with a few clear words. To the Emperor's demands about the exarchate, Aistulf returned a categorical refusal. He next tried, by every means, to dissuade the Pope from his journey to visit Pepin. But neither the exhortations nor threats affected the firmness of Pope Stephen, who dismissed the imperial embassy and all the laymen of his suite and, taking with him only a few clerics, turned his steps toward France. The *Liber pontificalis*, in its account, which seems to be the work of some member of the papal escort, shows us the Pope leaving Pavia on November 15, 753, reaching the Aosta valley, crossing over the St. Bernard pass, and coming down to the Abbey of St. Maurice in Valais. There he had hoped to confer with Pepin. But instead, he found merely two messengers of the Frankish King, who requested him to continue his journey and accompanied him as far as the neighborhood of Langres. There they met first the King's young son Charles, a boy about

⁸¹ *Flentes, ululantes, et nequaquam eum penitus ambulare sinebant. Lib. pont., I, 445.*

twelve years old, who would be the great Charlemagne, then King Pepin himself, who came forward three miles from his residence to the villa of Ponthion.³²

The account of this interview given in the *Liber pontificalis* should be supplemented by the account of the Frankish chroniclers. The papal annalist insists especially upon the homage which Pepin paid to Stephen, dismounting from his horse at sight of the Pope, prostrating himself, then taking hold of the stirrup of the Pope's horse and walking for some distance beside him in the manner of equerry.³³

Several Frankish chronicles—those of Moissac, of Metz, and of the continuator of Fredegarius—lay particular stress upon the homage paid to the King by the Pope. They say that Stephen and his clerics, clothed in haircloth, with ashes on their heads, and imploring mercy, prostrated themselves before Pepin.³⁴

The two narratives are not necessarily contradictory. We may suppose there were prostrations on both sides and that the chroniclers, according to their nationality, emphasized either those of the King or those of the Pope.

After the ceremonial formalities were concluded, the Pope stated his claims. He begged the King of the Franks to take in hand the defense of the cause of St. Peter and of the Republic of the Romans;³⁵ but he also asked him to effect the restoration of the exarchate of Ravenna to its lawful possessor.³⁶ This was the supreme act of the Sovereign Pontiff's condescension toward Constantinople.

Pepin gladly yielded to these demands and, out of consider-

³² *Lib. pont.*, I, 447.

³³ This is the first example of the *officium stratoris*, that was later appealed to as a precedent in the dispute between the popes and the emperors.

³⁴ *Hist. des Gaules*, V, 2, 67.

³⁵ *Ut causam Beati Petri et reipublicae Romanorum disponderet. Lib. pont.*, I, 448.

³⁶ *Ut illi placitum fuerit exarchatum Ravennae et reipublicae jura seu loca reddere. Lib. pont.*, I, 448.

ation for the recommendation of the Pope, who, says his biographer, abhorred the shedding of blood, attempted to settle the question through diplomacy. Three successive embassies and the generous offer of 12,000 gold solidi to Aistulf were ineffective to induce the latter to abandon his claims. The tricky Lombard even tried to exploit against Pepin and the Pope certain family strifes and the prestige connected with the former duke of Austrasia, Carloman, who had become a monk at Monte Cassino. Through the abbot of Monte Cassino, who was a subject of the Lombard kingdom, he had the prince-monk come out of the monastery to defend his so-called rights against Pepin and Stephen. It was a surprise and even a scandal to see reappear on the political scene, in conflict with the pope, the prince who had resolved to hide his life in the seclusion of a monastery. The surprise and scandal did not last long. Carloman was captured and perhaps compelled to take up the religious life again, but this time outside the Lombard frontiers. He had to retire to a monastery of Vienne in Dauphiny, where he died the next year.³⁷

The Coronation of Pepin

Military action was becoming urgent. It was decided upon at a national assembly held in March, 754, in the vicinity of Soissons.³⁸ A second assembly, held on April 14 of the same year at Quierzy-sur-Oise, set forth the precise aim of the expedition, which was to give, or rather to restore, to the Apostle St. Peter a certain territorial zone, the limits of which were probably exactly delimited; in fact, for a long time we find reference to the *Charter of Quierzy*. But the loss of this im-

³⁷ *Annales regii*, year 755; *Histoire des Gaules*, V, 63.

³⁸ *Chronique de Moissac*, year 754; *Fredegarius*, chap. 120; Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, chap. 6; *Hist. des Gaules*, V, 2, 67, 89.

portant document prevents us from knowing its contents precisely.³⁹ At a third assembly, held on July 28 of the next year at Saint-Denis, the Pope renewed the coronation of Pepin, associated with him in the coronation his two sons who had also signed the Charter of Quierzy, and declared all three of them *patricians of the Romans*. This unprecedented coronation of a king and his sons by the Pope not merely confirmed the legitimacy of Pepin's kingship and that of his dynasty, but seemed to raise the royalty of the Franks above other royalties of Europe.⁴⁰

The title of patrician, which had often been given by the emperors, but without anything added, as a mere honorary distinction, suggested, in this expression *patrician of the Romans*, the idea of a right of effective protectorate over the Papal States. Henceforth the office of duke of Rome became useless and, in fact, after 754, it does not again appear.⁴¹ And there was now no reason for the restoration of an exarch. The Holy Roman Empire was in germ in the acts of the assembly of Saint-Denis.⁴²

³⁹ The purport of this pact of Quierzy, called the *donation* or the *restitution* or the *promise* of Quierzy, has given rise in France and Germany to endless discussions. See Moeller, *Histoire du Moyen Age*, pp. 506 f. The document has the form of a donation, since Pepin in it gives and in return asks only for prayers; it is a restitution, because what he gives is in fact already possessed by St. Peter, that is, by the pope; and it is a promise, because what Pepin gives, he has not yet conquered.

⁴⁰ Stephen II calls Pepin the anointed of St. Peter (. . . *beatum Petrum, qui vos in reges unxit*). Jaffé, *Codex carolinus*, no. 6, p. 26; no. 7, p. 41. *PL*, XCVIII, 105.

⁴¹ Duchesne, *Les premiers temps de l'état pontifical*, p. 65.

⁴² Several questions have arisen about these assemblies of 754. Martens considers them a fiction. But in that case how are we to explain the agreement of the independent sources which speak of them, the Annals of Metz, the continuer of Fredegarius, the *Liber pontificalis*, and Einhard? True, these sources do not clearly distinguish between the first two assemblies, a circumstance which has prompted certain writers to reduce them to a single assembly (Kleinclausz, in Lavissee, *Histoire de France*, II, Part I, 273). Other writers, basing their conclusion on Fustel de Coulanges, maintain that these assemblies had no deliberative power and merely registered the decisions of the King. According to this view, the aid given to the Pope was not the work of the national representation of France, but the act of the personal decision of the King. The letter of Stephen II, addressed to the lords of the assembly, *ad proceres Francorum* (Sirmond, *Concilia antiqua Galliae*, II, 10) seems to make this opinion un-

Pepin's Victory over Aistulf

After a final summons, the Frankish army set forth. Aistulf decided to resist. But, defeated in the Susa valley, routed, besieged in Pavia, he had to yield and swear to restore the invaded territories. This oath of the Lombard King was kept no better than the previous oaths. Scarcely had Pepin returned to France, when he received from the Pope letters full of alarm and more urgent than ever, Aistulf, not satisfied with keeping the conquered provinces, besieged Rome with three armies. It was mid-winter, 756, a season when a new expedition of the Franks seemed difficult.

The Romans resisted the siege heroically for two months, and the time for the assembly which the Franks usually held in the spring was approaching, when a papal delegation, composed of the Bishop of Ostia and two Roman noblemen, after passing the investing lines, reached Pepin's court. They brought three letters. The first was addressed to the King by the Pope; the second was sent to the Frankish nation by the Roman people; the third, more solemn and pressing, was supposed to have been written by St. Peter himself and was addressed to the King and the nation. When the national assembly of the Franks heard that cry of distress, uttered by the oppressed people to the powerful nation, and that appeal of the Prince of the Apostles promising his defenders to assist them "as if he were alive in their midst," an outburst of indignation stirred the Franks, who once more advanced on the Alpine route, cut the Lombards to pieces, and repaid them ravage for ravage, relieving Rome and besieging Pavia. Aistulf felt he was lost. He considered himself happy to purchase peace by abandoning to Pepin a third of his royal treasury and by promising him an annual payment of 1,200 gold solidi. The

tenable. Furthermore, the idea of Fustel de Coulanges is not so absolute as it is claimed to be.

faithful keeping of the preceding treaty was guaranteed by the giving of several hostages and by an armed contingent which Pepin left there under command of his best officers.

While Pepin was besieging Pavia, another Byzantine embassy, with John the silentiarius at its head, appeared before the King of the Franks, urgently asking him for the restoration of the exarchate to the Empire. Pepin replied: "I have armed only for love of St. Peter and the forgiveness of my sins." Refusing to consider the matter further, he drew up the famous donation, by which he transferred to the Roman Pontiff as representing the Prince of the Apostles, the greater part of the lands that had become his by right of conquest. We no longer possess the text of Pepin's donation. But from the *Liber pontificalis* we know that Pepin *restored* to the States of St. Peter almost all the cities won by him from the Lombards: the exarchate of Ravenna and the Pentapolis,⁴³ that is, the country situated between the Apennines and the sea, from the course of the Po to Ancona, in other words, the duchy of Rome, besides the lands of the States of St. Peter invaded by Aistulf.

The "Donation" of Pepin

Thenceforth a new state existed in the international law of Europe. In the official papal documents it began to be called the *States of the Church*, *Sanctae Ecclesiae Respublica*.⁴⁴ Furthermore, King Pepin, the patrician of the Romans and protector of this new state, had just acquired by his brilliant victories a dominance that made him the arbiter of Italy. When Aistulf died in 756 shortly after his defeat, a strife broke out between

⁴³ Pentapolis was the name given to a province made up of five chief cities: Rimini, Pesaro, Fano, Sinigaglia, and Ancona.

⁴⁴ Jaffé, *Monumenta carolina*, *Codex Carolinus*, no. 6, p. 35; no. 11, p. 65. However, until Charlemagne's conquest of Italy, the popes continued giving to the Eastern emperors outward marks of official dependence. The first papal medal was probably struck about 786. H. de l'Épinois, *Le gouvernement des papes au Moyen Age*, 2d ed., p. 14.

two candidates, Ratchis the brother of Aistulf, who had become a monk, and Desiderius (Didier) the duke of Tuscany. The influence of Pepin and of the Pope brought about the choice of Desiderius. Ratchis returned to his monastery, and Desiderius expressed his gratitude to the Church by turning over to it all the districts lost by the Church through the conquests of Liutprand, the predecessor of Aistulf.

Such was the origin of the temporal power of the Holy See. Quite rightly Pepin called his act of donation or cession a restitution. "The revolution which put the pope in the place of the exarch concerned rather theoretical forms than the real condition of affairs."⁴⁵ For a long time the popes had assumed the burden and responsibility of these states in very difficult circumstances and had rescued them from the barbarian invasions. Being practically abandoned by the Byzantine emperors, they were clearly left to the rule of the popes. That sacred land, those monuments erected in honor of the holy Apostles, those treasures slowly accumulated through the piety of the faithful with a view to the needs of the Church and of the poor, the unanimous and express will of the faithful of Rome and of Italy did not want to see administered by anyone except the lawful successor of St. Peter.

A formal treaty, drawn up and agreed to after a most lawful conquest, officially confirmed this situation. As the Gallican Fleury writes: "Most sovereigns have no other title of legitimacy."⁴⁶ And Joseph de Maistre says: "In all of Europe there is no sovereignty more justifiable."⁴⁷ Says Bossuet: "God, who willed that the Roman Church, the common mother of all kingdoms, should thereafter not be dependent upon any kingdom for its temporalities and that the see where all the faithful must keep the unity, at length was placed above the partialities which

⁴⁵ Quoted by A. Berthelot in Lavis and Rambaud, *Hist. gén.*, I, 301.

⁴⁶ *Histoire ecclésiastique*, Vol. XVI, fourth discourse, no. 10.

⁴⁷ *Du pape*, Bk. II, chap. 6.

the diverse interests and jealousies of governments might cause, laid the foundations of this great design through Pepin and Charlemagne. It was by a happy consequence of their liberality that the Church, independent in its head from all temporal powers, was seen in a condition more freely to exercise that heavenly power of ruling souls; and that, holding the just balance, amid so many empires often mutually hostile, it maintained the unity in the whole body, sometimes by strict decrees and sometimes by prudent accommodation.”⁴⁸ “Render the ancient and necessary patrimony of the clergy sacred and inviolable,” said Montesquieu; “let it be fixed and eternal like that body itself.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Discours sur l'unité de l'Église.*

⁴⁹ *The Spirit of Laws*, Bk. XXV, sec. 5.

CHAPTER XII

The Carolingian Empire (757-800)

THE formation of the Papal States was of concern not only to the faithful of Rome, but also to the faithful of the whole world. Around the "Republic of St. Peter" would be formed that vast federation of the converted nations which was called the "Christian Republic." At the Third Council of Toledo (589), St. Leander bishop of Seville said, in the course of an eloquent address:

Holy Church of God, rejoice! Knowing how sweet is charity and how delightful is unity, you preach nothing but the alliance of the nations, you sigh after nothing but the union of the races. Rejoice in the Lord; because your desires will not be disappointed. . . . Pride divided the races by the diversity of tongues; charity must reunite them. The natural order wishes that all nations, sprung from one man and united in their origin, should be united by faith and charity. . . . The owner of the universe is one, the things owned ought also to be allied in unity.¹

The imperial notion was ever a living idea. The empire appeared always to the literary men of that time as the ideal and definite form of the political organization of the world. Christian preachers, by reminding rulers of the examples of the great emperors, kept up the enchanting memory of them. And Rome always appeared as the head of that ideal empire. Although it was no longer as the city of Romulus, it was, with a much more venerable title, as the city consecrated by the martyrdom of St. Peter.

¹ Mansi, IX, 1003 f.

Mohammedanism

Growing perils on the frontiers suggested to the Christian nations the idea of a closer union and of a firm and lasting organization for the defense of their faith and their national autonomy.

In the north of Europe the Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian pirates, who received a bloody defeat in the sixth century from Theodoric the elder son of Clovis,² suddenly reappeared in the eighth century on the seacoast of Gaul and in the coastal islands of Great Britain, pillaging, terrible, elusive. The seacoast population was terrified by their savage cries, their wild songs, the mere look of the frightful heraldic animals surmounting the prows of their warships.³

In the south the danger was no less serious. The Saracens, masters of Spain, in 732 had encountered the Frankish army of Charles Martel in a formidable encounter. Their pirates were making numerous raids in Sicily, Italy, and Provence. Says De Hammer, a scholar learned in things Arabic: "Among the Arabs, pillage was looked upon as a lawful method of gain: it was the lot reserved for the valiant."⁴ In the seventh century, however, a religious revolution, the primary purpose of which seems to have been merely purification of the old popular beliefs, gave this race a coherence and a rallying cry and thus made its power more fearful. In less than a hundred years the irresistible enthusiasm aroused by Mohammed had created an empire extending from China to the Pyrenees, twice the size of the Roman Empire, six times as extensive as that of Charlemagne, ten times as large as that later founded by Napoleon.⁵ The greatness of that empire, the formidable power

² St. Gregory of Tours, III, 3.

³ For a description of the Danish fleet of King Canute, see *Cnutonis regis gesta*, I, chap. 4; II, chap. 4.

⁴ J. de Hammer, *Mines de l'Orient*, I, 372 ff.

⁵ In the middle of the eighth century the Arabian empire had reached the limits

of its arms, the fierce proselytism of its religion, and the capacious prestige of its philosophy constituted the greatest external danger to the Church throughout the Middle Ages. This politico-religious institution was the work of a man whose obscure and complex psychology has not yet been completely analyzed and grasped.

Mohammed (or Mahomet) was born in Mecca, April 20, 571. Arabia was then a prey to gross polytheism. In 611, when he was forty years old, following a pretended apparition of the angel Gabriel to him, Mohammed thought of restoring his country to the purity of primitive monotheism. Such seems to have been his aim at first. From the Old and New Testament he gathered lofty maxims, which he mingled with the traditions of his country and with his own imaginings. From them he made a doctrine. Its moral application is summed up in *Islam*, that is, in abandonment, in submission to an almighty God, placed very high above the world. At the outset, the new prophet's character appeared gentle and calm. Yet strange phenomena and convulsive crises frequently were evident in him. His exaltation increased.

His doctrine lost its earlier simplicity. In his *suras*, or maxims, the collection of which forms that unequal and incongruous book known as the Koran (Reading), he taught the oneness and omnipotence of God, sanctioned polygamy, and offered, as reward to the faithful of Islam, the eternal joys of paradise where, far from all sin, under the cool shade of trees, they would enjoy delicious drinks in silver goblets and would eat exquisite fruit. He prescribed prayers, fasting, ablutions, pilgrimages to Mecca with processional encircling of the Kaaba. He recommended union and solidarity among the believers of

of its rapid expansion. "On the north it reached the Caucasus, and even penetrated that region; on the east it took in the middle Indus and the best part of the Turanian plain; on the west it encircled Asia Minor, spread over the whole stretch of northern Africa as far as the Sahara and the Atlantic Ocean, and occupied the entire Iberian peninsula." Wahl, in Lavissee and Rambaud, *Histoire générale*, I, 478.

Islam. He said: "O believers, give alms from the best things you have acquired, from the fruits which you have made the earth bring forth. . . . You will attain perfect piety only when you have given alms of what you cherish most." As to non-believers, his teaching varied. At times he counseled tolerance, saying: "Listen not to the infidels or the hypocrites; but do them no ill." More often he ordered a war to the death. "Make war on those who do not believe in God or in the last day," he says. . . . "When you meet any infidels, kill them, to the point of making a great carnage, and you will tighten the shackles." Probably the *suras* recommending tolerance and mildness date from the early days of Mohammed's preaching. But his character changed. Obligated to flee from Mecca in consequence of the violent opposition of his countrymen, he withdrew to Yatreb, which became Medina, the city par excellence. There he arrived September 24, 622. This date marks the beginning of the Mohammedan era, which starts with the hegira, that is, Mohammed's flight.

Mohammedan Conquests

In his exasperation, the prophet completely forgot his teachings about patience and resignation. Henceforth his words were all warlike. Terrible, sanguinary, merciless, he exclaims: "Slay the infidels wherever you find them, hide in ambush against them." From the ranks of his followers he formed an army. He promised paradise to all his soldiers who would die on the battle-field from a wound received in front. Freely or under compulsion, all Arabia rallied to the fierce prophet. For many, might itself became an argument of truth. Islam is mighty, they said: Islam has its might from the Almighty. Furthermore, in this doctrine of Islam, the whole content, its errors as well as its truths, seemed to favor its spread. By its fundamental dogma of the oneness of God, by the respect it

inspired toward the Divinity, Islam corresponded to the deep-rooted religious aspirations in the Arab race. By the absence of any mysteries and of any really supernatural element in its doctrine, by its easy morality, remarkably adapted to the customs of the country and of the period, it was mindful of the pride, sensuality, the warlike and conquering instincts of the race to whom it was addressed.

Islam's progress was rapid. The prophet died in March, 632. But he said to his disciples: "After I am gone, you will accomplish the conquest of Syria and Persia." His successor, Abu Bekr, fulfilled his prediction. At one and the same time he attacked the two neighbors of the Arab empire: namely, the Persian Empire and the Byzantine Empire. Mohammed, in whom the foresight of delicate political sense was joined with religious enthusiasm, was aware of the weakness of these two empires and had no need of a revelation to forecast their proximate fall. Persia, since the time of Chosroes, had been given up to political anarchy. The religious anarchy, a result of the numerous issues springing from the Monophysite heresy, had enfeebled the administrative efficiency of the Eastern Empire. Syria, Egypt, and Persia one after the other fell under the blows of the Arab army, which a strict discipline directed and which the memory of the prophet animated in battle. The dynasty of the Ommiads, which in 680 succeeded the dynasty of the Alides, carried forward the conquests of Islam. It invaded Africa, also Spain, where the Visigoth people no longer had any vitality.

After the fall of the Ommiad dynasty, supplanted in the middle of the eighth century by the Abbassides, the Arab empire in Africa and Asia did indeed experience a political and religious crisis which has been compared to the crisis of the Carolingian Empire after the death of Charlemagne. But the Mussulman fanatics tried to make up for this by pillaging the shores of Europe; and, in spite of all difficulties, the caliphates

of Bagdad and Cordova were resplendent.⁶ A brilliant civilization, enriched by contact with Hellenism and with Persia, soon fascinated Europe. The Christian nations, weakened by the crisis of formation which they were experiencing at that moment, had great need to unite and find a leader.

Charlemagne

Divine providence revealed this leader to the world. It was the son and successor of Pepin the Short. He is known to history as Charlemagne. Poetry and art, with their inclination to transfer to the physical qualities of great men the character of their works, have represented Charlemagne as of gigantic stature, with a magnificent beard, a thundering voice, and a terrifying look that miscreants could not face. Quite different is the portrait which Einhard gives us. He says: "Charles was large of body, robust, and tall, but his height did not exceed seven times the length of his foot. He had a short, thick neck, and a protruding stomach; but the proper proportion of the rest of his body concealed these defects. His voice, though penetrating, appeared too thin for so large a body. He walked with a firm step, and all his movements were virile."⁷

Of his work, art and poetry have noted mostly its outward and brilliant aspect; they have viewed him especially as a warrior and conqueror. An impartial study of the historical documents leads to a very different conclusion. Charlemagne was above all a civilizer and a pacifier.⁸ When he resorted to arms,

⁶ The caliphate of Bagdad was founded by Abu Bekr in 632; the caliphate of Cordova was established by Abderam in 756; the caliphate of Cairo was established later by the Fatimites in 909. On the life of Mohammed, see H. Lammens, S.J., *Fatima et les filles de Mahomet*, critical notes for the study of the *Sira*.

⁷ Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, chap. 22; *Hist. des Gaules*, V, 98; *PL*, XCVII, 46 ff.

⁸ "Examine his reign under its different aspects; and you will see that the darling object of his life was to civilize the nations he governed. Let us regard him first as a warrior. He was always in the field, from the south to the north-east, from the Ebro to the Elbe and Weser. Perhaps you imagine that these expeditions were the effect

it was almost always to put down elements of social disturbance or to open the way for the preaching of the Gospel. If we except the terrible execution at Verden, which is the stain upon his public life, we see him constantly engaged in rendering the battles less bloody.⁹ His usual procedure was to terrify his opponents by an enormous display of military force. Generally this method succeeded. Charlemagne had merely to show himself to make everyone yield before him.

If we also recall that this great man was, by the studies of his palace school, imbued with the memory of the Roman emperors and that he even contemplated, toward the end of the eighth century, marrying the Empress of the East, it will not be rash for us to suppose that, with a view to European pacification even more than in a spirit of personal ambition, he entertained the idea of some day becoming the heir of the Caesars. Under his sway he had grouped peoples of different races and of interests that were often contrary to one another. To force them to accept him as sovereign arbiter in their disputes would be a difficult matter so long as he spoke to them merely as king of the Franks. But if he could speak with the august and dread title of emperor, of the successor to the Caesars of Rome, consecrated by the Church after the manner of the sovereigns of the East, he would have the advantage of a great prestige in the civilizing mission which he longed to accomplish.

It may well be that, at the end of the eighth century, the vague idea of a restoration of the Empire occupied the mind of the popes, too. At that time St. Leo III adorned the great hall of the Lateran Palace with a mosaic representing on one side Pope St. Sylvester beside Emperor Constantine,

of choice, and sprung from a pure love of conquest? No such thing. . . . What he did sprang from necessity, and a desire to repress barbarism." Guizot, *General History of Civilization in Europe*, Lecture 3.

⁹ Einhard and the monk of St. Gall return to this idea again and again. Cf. Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, chaps. 8, 9, 11, 13; Mon. Sangal., II, 17.

and on the other side Leo III himself beside Charlemagne.¹⁰

True, we find no exact trace of any of these notions in the succession of events that led to the restoration of the Empire. If we should consider merely the bare facts and not take into account the currents of opinion which give them their significance and their bearing, we would suppose that the whole affair was nothing more than a palace quarrel, accompanied by the bloody uprising and a far-reaching trial, determining that great historic event.

Pope St. Paul I (757-767)

Pepin's donation assured the "Republic of St. Peter" of security against enemies from without. Stephen's successor, his brother Paul I, whose energy and prudence could be appraised in the various diplomatic missions he had filled, profited by the situation to develop the religious and political institutions of the city of Rome. At the Pope's side the twenty-five cardinal-priests, attached to as many presbyteral churches, formed his great official council. The influence of the seven deacons, who were in charge of the administration of the seven ecclesiastical regions, was perhaps more effective. Their chief, the arch-deacon, had control of the entire ecclesiastical personnel.

Among other important officials, whom we shall soon see playing their part in history, were the vidame or governor of the papal palace, the *vestiarius* or keeper of the treasury, the *sacellarius* or general paymaster, and the notaries. The chief of these notaries, called the *primicerius*, along with the arch-deacon and the archpriest, constituted the triumvirate whose office it was to govern the Church at the pope's death, until the election of his successor. The clergy was recruited either through the *schola cantorum*, a sort of seminary or orphanage, as it was sometimes called, where the children of the peo-

¹⁰ *Lib. pont.*, II, 35.

ple were brought up, or through the *cubiculum sacrum*, where we find concentrated the services of the chancery and of the administration, and where we find the sons of the Roman aristocracy.

In addition to this ordained clergy, made up of priests, deacons, subdeacons, and those in minor orders, all of them observing celibacy from the time of their entrance into the higher orders, was to be found a whole world, at times turbulent and scheming, of clerics not ordained, who were distinguished from the laity simply by their tonsure. Usually they were married and held administrative offices. It was from these clerics that the hardest trials of the Church came.

The Church was also to experience other tribulations, coming from the lay and military aristocracy. As head of the *Respublica Romanorum*, the pope had under his orders the army, divided into twelve *scholae* or regional groups. The peasants of the agricultural colonies or *domus cultae* of the States of the Church had likewise formed militias, recognizing the Roman pontiff as their supreme chief. There was no longer any question of a commander-in-chief of the army¹¹ or of an exarch, or of any other official responsible to an authority outside Italy. But the danger arose again under another form.

In the Rome of that period were to be found elements of discord which the development of the temporal power had not calmed, which it had, in some ways, even nourished. The danger was not now from the outside, but had passed within. From the moment when the pope held in his hands all the great offices of the state as well as those of the Church and thus became a sort of distributor of fortune and power, the lay aristocracy felt the need of taking a more active part in the papal election.¹²

¹¹ We still find dukes in the papal states. But the title is one altogether new, taken by the lords.

¹² Lapôte, *L'Europe et le Saint-Siège*, pp. 209 f.

We have already seen that aristocracy in command of the army, in which it kept the highest ranks for itself, become organized into a kind of privileged caste, rivaling the clerical order. Henceforth the conflict becomes sharper. "Woe to the pope, if he dares to choose the chief collaborators of his government outside that aristocratic circle. Woe to him if, born in a humbler rank, he enters the *patriarchium* escorted by poor relatives who are eager to enrich themselves. . . . The political power of the Holy See was scarcely founded when there began that sad rôle of certain papal families, of that nepotism from which the papacy at times has suffered so much."¹³

It was necessary to describe in some detail the state of the personnel in the entourage of the Holy See. This explanation enables us the better to understand what sort of difficulties the popes had to contend with in the lamentable events we must presently relate.

Probably Stephen II foresaw these painful conflicts when he bestowed upon Pepin the Short and his sons the title of patrician of the Romans. But the office of patrician was too ill defined to be accepted by an arrogant and jealous aristocracy or to repress the cupidity of a rapacious and scheming nepotism. Sooner or later the restoration of the empire appeared as the liberating institution of the papal domain, as the necessary complement to the donation of Pepin the Short. It may well be that such an institution at first was not grasped and accepted by the people of Rome. But events would prove its imperative necessity by showing the Romans that, in the period of disturbance through which they were passing, they could not rely upon their own institutions without running the risk of anarchy, and could not accept the protection of a neighboring ruler without surrendering themselves to all the arbitrary whims of Caesarism.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 210 f.

The Roman Aristocracy

Stephen II's brother and successor, Paul I, who was elected on May 22, 757, had been brought up with him in the Lateran Palace. Says the *Liber Pontificalis*: "He was a mild and charitable man. There is considerable evidence that in the silence of the night, accompanied by his servants, he used to visit the homes of the poor, especially the sick who could not leave their homes, and that he gave them food in abundance, as likewise all other assistance they needed. He was also a most energetic defender of the Catholic faith."¹⁴ From the very outset of his pontificate, Paul I understood the dangers which the Holy See might encounter from the claims of the nobility and, in the management of the Roman state, he gave a marked preponderance to the clergy.

Unfortunately the party of the clergy at that time had at its head a clever schemer, one of those unordained clerics who yielded to all the incitements of greed and ambition and who were beginning to be the scourge of the Church. This man was the primicerius Christopher. He played an important part under Stephen II, whom he accompanied on his journey to France. We find him in most of that Pope's negotiations with King Desiderius and the court of Constantinople. When Paul I became pope, Christopher held the principal offices in his own hands. To ignore him or dispense with his services was well-nigh impossible. Christopher took advantage of his high position. He was harsh and disdainful toward his rivals. In the ranks of the military aristocracy there spread against the government of Paul I a hidden hostility which, so it has been said, was directed by the ambitious primicerius.

In 767, when the Pope fell seriously ill, the opposition was openly manifested. The heart and soul of the party was a cer-

¹⁴ *Fortissimus enim erat orthodoxae fidei defensor. Lib. pont., I, 463 f.*

tain Duke Toto (or Theodore), associated with his three brothers. The revolt broke out at the death of Paul I in June, 767. The conspirators, recruited especially among the nobility of the country districts and the small towns, burst into the Lateran Palace. "Now that the pope is sovereign of the whole duchy of Rome," they exclaimed, "it is right that all his subjects take part in the election." Then, as though they by themselves represented the whole people, they at once chose Toto's elder brother Constantine, a soldier who was not even a cleric. The Bishop of Preneste, who was present, was forced to give tonsure to the newly elected. The next day and the day after, Constantine was ordained subdeacon, deacon, and priest, and lastly was consecrated bishop of Rome on July 5.¹⁵ One of the first acts of the spurious Pope was to imprison the primicerius Christopher in a monastery.

Such a deed of violence was likely to provoke a reaction and called for energetic repression. Under Christopher's influence, the repression was unfortunately excessive and the reaction insolent. The astute primicerius succeeded in escaping from the monastery where he was imprisoned. He betook himself to Desiderius king of the Lombards and asked his support. Desiderius at the head of his army, thanks to the treason of some followers of Constantine, entered Rome. Duke Toto was struck from behind during the fracas; the false pope, Constantine, was found crouching in a chapel and was dragged forth. He was forced to undergo ridicule in a cavalcade in the streets of the city, and was degraded. His eyes were put out; his election was declared null; and it was decided to choose a successor.¹⁶

But this was not the end of the disturbances. Christopher and his friends had a candidate ready, a good and gentle monk, named Stephen. But Desiderius, who had so greatly assisted in crushing the party of the nobility, had his own candidate,

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, I, 468 f.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, I, 471.

a priest who, it seems, was possessed of no less commendable piety, Philip abbot of St. Guy. Profiting by a momentary absence of Christopher, the Lombards had Philip acclaimed by the people and installed him in the Lateran. But Christopher returned to Rome. He was more influential in Rome than Desiderius was and experienced no difficulty in ridding himself of Philip. He had Philip seized by a certain Gratosus, one of Toto's assassins, who surprised him in the Lateran Palace and quietly brought him back to his monastery of St. Guy. Then the primicerius circulated among the clergy, the nobility, and the people, and presented them with his candidate, who was elected on August 1, 768, by the entire population, assembled in the ancient Forum near the Church of St. Adrian.¹⁷

Pope Stephen III (768-772)

The new pope, Stephen III, was a Sicilian by birth. He was a scholarly and pious priest. Says the *Liber pontificalis*: "He was very learned in the Holy Scriptures and ecclesiastical traditions, and very faithful in their observance."

At first a monk in the monastery of St. Chrysogonus, founded by Gregory III, then called to the Lateran by Pope Zachary, he had edified everyone by his purity of life. During Paul I's illness, he assisted the ailing pontiff to the very end with admirable devotedness. Christopher, who counted on his virtues to have him accepted by the people and the clergy, also counted on his excessive kindliness, so that he himself might govern in his name. He did not altogether succeed; but he did obtain from him certain regrettable measures, and under his patronage carried out detestable revenge against his vanquished foes.

Under the influence of the intriguing and vindictive primicerius, Stephen III turned to the two Frankish princes, Charles

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, I, 471.

and Carloman, and requested them to send to Rome a certain number of Frankish bishops.¹⁸ Thirteen prelates answered the summons and, along with about forty Italian bishops, in 769 formed a council at the Basilica of St. John Lateran. Before this gathering Christopher haled the wretched Constantine, fallen, humbled, blind. He was charged with every sort of crime. As we read in the Annals of the Papacy, the poor blind man "suddenly sank to the ground, stretched out his arms, and cried for mercy."¹⁹ The decision was postponed to a later session. At this second session, the accused recovered his courage. As he was charged with being elected pope while he was a simple layman, Constantine turned to his judges, whom he was unable to see but whom he called by name, and, as he named them one by one, he exclaimed: "You, Sergius of Ravenna, were you not a simple layman when you were made archbishop? And you, Stephen of Naples, were you not also a layman when you were raised to the episcopacy?" Says the *Liber pontificalis*: "When it was seen that he would continue in this fashion, some of the judges, losing their restraint, hurled themselves upon him and forced him to bow his head beneath their blows."²⁰ Then he was driven out of the basilica. A *Kyrie eleison* was sung to ask God's pardon for obedience having been shown to such a man; they declared null and void all the acts of his pretended pontificate. Lastly they imprisoned him in a monastery.

The assembly of bishops closed with the promulgation of an important and very useful decree regarding pontifical elections. The decree forbade, under pain of anathema, the elevation to the papacy of "any layman, or of any cleric who had not attained the rank of cardinal-deacon or cardinal-priest,"²¹

¹⁸ Jaffé, I, 285 (no. 2380).

¹⁹ *Corruens in terra, manibus extensis in pavimento, petens misericordiae veniam. Lib. pont., I, 475.*

²⁰ *Atapis ejus cervicem cedere facientes. Lib. pont., I, 475.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 476. There were not yet any cardinal-bishops (Thomassin, *Ancienne et*

that is, who was not attached to a title. Furthermore, under the same pain of anathema, it was forbidden "for any layman, whether of the militia or of the other forces, to be present at a papal election, which must take place by the bishops and the whole clergy. Before a pope is brought to the patriarchal palace, the entire army, the citizens, and the people of Rome will come to salute him. Then the decree of election will be presented, and all will subscribe to it."²² In fine, the assembly forbade anybody to come to Rome from the castles of Tuscany or Campania during the time of the papal election. In other words, once a pope was elected and installed, the act of his election must be ratified by the laity, but by Roman laity only. We shall see how this wise decree, after being for a while the rule of papal elections, was afterward abandoned.

Two years later, Desiderius king of the Lombards, in anger against Christopher, whom he blamed for the defeat of his candidate Philip and for the appeal to the King of the Franks, had the timid Pope Stephen surrender the primicerius to him. Christopher's eyes were then put out in so cruel a manner that he died as a result a short time afterward.²³ A few months later (February 3, 772), Stephen III departed this life. The election raised to the papal see a man of invincible energy, of solid intelligence, and of irreproachable honesty, the deacon Adrian, a member of one of the noblest families of Rome.

Pope Adrian I (772-795)

Adrian I's chief concern was to avoid a recurrence of scenes like those which clouded the government of his predecessor. In-

nouvelle discipline, II, 440). The election of the pope by the cardinal-bishops was regulated later by Nicholas II in the eleventh century and by Alexander III in the thirteenth century.

²² Mansi, XII, 710.

²³ The event is related by Stephen III himself in a letter to Bertrade and to Charles king of the Franks. See Jaffé, I, 2388.

triguers had obtained from the weakness of Stephen III decrees of banishment against several men of merit. The first act of the new Pope was to recall all these exiles.²⁴ This decisive act, so prompt and firm, was effective. Adrian was consecrated amid general rejoicing. A short time later, following a speedily conducted inquiry in April, 772, the new Pope did justice upon the murderers and their accomplices.

Adrian's political sense made him understand that the peril was not permanently removed. The power of the military aristocracy and that of the upper clergy were almost equal: irritation against both parties was extreme. If a pope of weak character should come into power, the danger of anarchy would arise again. Another able statesman made a similar reflection, but with very different intentions in mind. It was King Desiderius. Besides the violent temperament of King Aistulf, he possessed the qualities of a consummate diplomat. Ever since his coming to the throne of the Lombards, he endeavored in every way to acquire a preponderant position in Europe. One of his daughters he married to Charlemagne; another to Tasilon of Bavaria who had been a most formidable opponent of Charlemagne. He entered into relation with the Emperor of the East, promising him his alliance.

The dream of empire seems to have haunted his ambition. Perhaps he foresaw that Charlemagne would be a terrible rival. After Carloman's death when the Frankish nobility was divided, he welcomed at his court the widow and the children of the dead prince, and the dissatisfied noblemen who gathered about them, such as Duke Autchar. But the internal divisions at Rome suggested to him especially the hope of becoming the arbiter of the Roman state. Powerfully seconded by a papal chamberlain, Paul Afiarta, he thought he might gain Pope Stephen III to his side. But Stephen himself rebelled against

²⁴ *In ipsa electionis die, confestim eadem hora qua electus est, reverti fecit illos.* *Lib. pont.*, I, 486 f.; Jaffé, p. 289, no. 2391.

his insolent interference. Escape from anarchy was of little use if that simply meant falling under the tyranny of a Caesar. Desiderius was more cautious with regard to the new Pope; he entered upon long negotiations with Adrian, offering him his services with tireless persistence. The well informed Pontiff rejected the King's repeated solicitations with effective constancy, demanding of him, as a preliminary condition to any friendly agreement, the restitution of all the territories of the papal states recently annexed by the Lombards.

In 773 Desiderius attempted to force the Pope's hand. Escorted by Duke Autchar and the sons of Carloman, he set out for Rome. He sent word ahead to the Pope that he was coming as a pilgrim, not as a foe. But Adrian, rightfully distrustful of this strange pilgrim, was not fooled by the trick. At the first report of Desiderius' approach, he summoned the militias of the neighboring cities, put the ramparts in a state of defense, and sent to the Lombard King three bishops who were instructed to forbid him to enter Roman territory, under pain of anathema.²⁵ This is the first time the word "anathema" was pronounced in connection with temporal power. Desiderius, who was at Viterbo, retraced his steps and went back to Pavia. Charlemagne was not unmindful of the events in Italy. And the Pope kept him informed of the perils threatening his domain.²⁶

While Desiderius, by his emissaries, tried to deceive the King of the Franks by interpreting the facts to his own advantage, Charlemagne, before interfering, decided to acquaint himself with the state of affairs through his own legates. To Rome and then to Pavia he sent two agents: Bishop George of Amiens and Abbot Vulfrad of St. Martin of Tours. They reported to Charlemagne that the situation was just as the Pope declared and that Desiderius declined to make any concession.

²⁵ Jaffé, 2401 f.

²⁶ Jaffé, 2402 f.

Pope Adrian and Charlemagne

Charlemagne thereupon began one of those vigorous campaigns which usually resulted in terrifying his foes by the display of immense forces and by the rapidity of the movements, in a manner to put his enemies to flight almost without striking a blow. Two army corps passed over the Alps, one by Val d'Aosta and the other by Mount Cenis. The Lombard army was routed at Susa, the cities of northern Italy submitted one after the other, and the Emperor encamped before Pavia in 773. The monk of St. Gall has preserved the epic account of the arrival of the Carolingian army before the capital of Lombardy and of the consequent terror. "When Charles, the iron emperor, wearing an iron helmet, his sturdy breast covered by a breastplate of iron, advanced as though in the midst of a harvest of iron, Duke Autchar grew pale at sound of the metal and fell to the ground as though lifeless." ²⁷

While the siege of Pavia was being continued, Charlemagne, seeing the feast of Easter approaching, went to Rome to celebrate it. This was the occasion of an important interview between the King of the Franks and the head of the Church. In the *Liber pontificalis* we read:

Upon receiving news of the approach of the King of the Franks, Pope Adrian was greatly surprised. He sent all the magistrates of Rome out to meet Charles, to a distance of about thirty miles, where they received him with the standard. When the King reached a point one mile from Rome, the Pope sent forth all the companies of the militia with their commanders and all the children that were being taught in the schools, carrying branches of palm and olive, acclaiming King Charles and singing his praises. The Pope decided that the venerable crosses should be carried before him, as used to be done at the reception of a patrician or an exarch. King Charles, as soon as he saw the crosses borne toward him, dismounted from his horse and proceeded

²⁷ Mon. Sangal., *De rebus bellicis Karoli Magni*, II, 26; *Histor. des Gaules*, V, 131.

on foot as far as St. Peter's Church. The Pope had already come to the church and was there awaiting the King's arrival, attended by the clergy, at the top of the steps. The King ascended the steps on his knees, kissing each step in turn. Then he embraced the Pope and took him by the hand. Thus they entered the church, while the clergy sang: Blessed be he who cometh in the name of the Lord.²⁸

This first meeting presaged the great political acts that took place a few days later, on April 6, 774. We read in the *Liber pontificalis*:

On Wednesday the Pope, accompanied by representatives of his clergy and his militia, held a conference with the King in the Church of St. Peter. He asked the King to confirm the donation which his father King Pepin and Charles himself and his brother Carloman had made at Quierzy to Pope Stephen. The King had the act read to him and, after approving it, along with all the lords, he ordered a like one to be drawn up by Etherius his chaplain and notary, and signed it with his own hand.²⁹

This donation was ampler than that of Pepin. The Pope became sovereign, not only of the exarchate of Ravenna and of Pentapolis, understood in their widest limits, but also of the duchies of Spoleto and Benevento, of Tuscany, Corsica, Venetia, and Istria. It is true that difficulties soon arose, either with the dukes of these latter territories or with the archbishop of Ravenna, and the Pope had to give up the duchies of Spoleto and Tuscany, as also Corsica.

The important conferences of April, 774, did more than add to the donation of Pepin the Short. They also prepared the way for the restoration of the empire. Charlemagne, who had been received at Rome as an exarch and a patrician, was thenceforth much concerned about the rights and duties attached to his protectorate. Furthermore, after the fall of Pavia, he took the title of King of the Lombards. With these various titles he

²⁸ *Lib. pont.*, I, 496 f.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, I, 498.

now assumed a rôle with limits hard to define, for they were probably only vaguely indicated in that "pact of love and fidelity" which the Pope refers to in his letters. Charlemagne, without requiring that the subjects of the Pope take an oath of fidelity to him,³⁰ demanded at least that they remain faithful to the Frankish alliance and never enter into an alliance with the enemies of the Franks. He assumed the right to receive appeals from any official or any Roman nobleman who might have a complaint to make, even were it against the pope himself.³¹ Yet he gave up the right, formerly exercised by the exarchs, of participating in the nomination or confirmation or installation of the sovereign pontiff. At Adrian I's death, he permitted the election and installation of Leo III without making use of any privilege.

This ill-defined rôle soon merged and was amplified in the title of emperor. But before we relate the glorious events of Christmas Day in the year 800, we must give an account of the painful scenes of the drama that was triumphantly concluded by St. Leo's coronation of Charlemagne.

Pope St. Leo (795-816)

The very day of Adrian I's burial (December 26, 795), his successor, Leo III, was elected. The *Liber pontificalis* says:

He was born at Rome and from childhood had been brought up in the patriarchal palace of the Lateran. There he studied the Psalter, the Sacred Scriptures, and all the ecclesiastical sciences, and was ordained subdeacon and then priest. His morals were pure, his speech eloquent, his mind firm. Whenever he met some eminent monk or some good servant of God, he joined him in godly conversation and in prayer. He visited the sick and practiced almsgiving gladly and cheerfully. He was beloved by all. And so he was elected pope by a

³⁰ Lapôte, *L'Europe et le Saint-Siège*, pp. 213 f. See also Viollet, *Histoire des institutions politiques et administr. de la France*, I, 265.

³¹ Jaffé, 2413, 2442, 2478.

unanimous vote on St. Stephen's Day, by all the bishops, the nobility, the clergy, and the people of Rome. Although he was very mild he was also very firm in defending the rights of the Church.³²

The conditions under which the new Pope reached his high office, his prompt and spontaneous election, the universal good will he enjoyed, the prestige of a holy life and a long acquaintance with public affairs, seemed to assure him a great and solid authority.

Yet those who knew the undercurrent of Roman politics were not without fear. Relatives and officials of the deceased Pope, disappointed in their schemes of ambition or greed, secretly complained and bestirred themselves. A conspiracy was spoken of. We find indications of these rumors in a letter to Alcuin from an archbishop of Salzburg, named Arno, who was in Rome in 798.³³ Leo III himself, from the very first days of his pontificate, seems to have had some inkling of the plots being hatched around him. One of the first things he did was to ask Charlemagne to keep an imperial legate permanently at Rome as a pledge of special protection and a guaranty of security.³⁴

The conspiracy broke out (April 25, 799) in circumstances which the Pope's biographer relates in detail.³⁵ Leo, accompanied by his usual escort, was on his way in a procession to the station church of St. Lawrence *in Lucina*. When he was in front of the monastery of St. Sylvester, recently founded by Pope Paul I, suddenly armed men, who had been lying in wait, fell upon him. The Pope's unarmed retinue was taken by surprise and fled, and the Pope himself was thrown to the ground. But two men were seen to leave the retinue and rush to the Pontiff: one stood at his head, the other at his feet. These two

³² *Lib. pont.*, II, 1.

³³ Jaffé, *Monumenta Alcuiniana*, 445.

³⁴ Einhard, *Annales*, year 796. *MGH, Scriptores*, I, 183. *Hist. des Gaules*, V, 212.

³⁵ *Lib. pont.*, II, 4 f.

men, who acted with the connivance of the band of attackers, were the primicerius of the papal palace, Paschal, a nephew of the preceding Pope,³⁶ and the sacellarius Campulus. The two traitors had joined the Pope's suite, after accosting them with friendly words. They are the ones who gave the signal to the prearranged conspirators.

A horrible scene followed. In the presence of the sacellarius and the primicerius, who were in charge of the outrageous proceeding, some ruffians tried to gouge out Leo's eyes and to tear out his tongue, while others heaped blows upon him and stripped him of his garments. They abandoned him in the middle of the street, thinking they had made him blind and dumb. Paschal and Campulus then returned to the attack. They dragged the Pontiff into the monastery and there, before the altar, again they attempted to tear out his tongue and to gouge out his eyes. Then, fearing that friends of the Pope would come to free him, they had him secretly removed, after night-fall, to the monastery of St. Erasmus.

Pope Leo III and Charlemagne

But the traitors were mistaken. The Pope had lost neither his sight nor his speech; or at least he recovered them.³⁷ Thanks to the aid of a loyal chamberlain, during the night he was able to escape from the narrow prison where he was confined and to go to St. Peter's. There he found a Frankish *missus* of Charlemagne. Accompanied by this *missus* and a few faithful followers, he had strength enough to go to the King of the Franks

³⁶ That Paschal was Adrian's nephew appears from a letter of Adrian himself. Jaffé, I, 2424.

³⁷ According to the martyrology, St. Leo III recovered his sight and speech miraculously. In a sermon preached in St. Peter's (December 23, 800), St. Leo III said: *Auditum et divulgatum est per multa loca, qualiter homines mali adversus me insurrexerunt et debilitare voluerunt*. Jaffé, *Mon. Carolina*, 378. Contemporaries were divided about the miraculous nature of Leo III's cure. See Lapôtre, *L'Europe et le Saint-Siège*, pp. 211 f.

who was then at Paderborn. Charlemagne received him most warmly and promised to give him justice.

However, the conspirators, angered by the failure of their outrage, pillaged the papal properties and set them on fire. Of a sudden they altered their procedure, changing from rioters to accusers. It is hard to ascertain clearly the charges which Paschal and Campulus brought against Leo III in the presence of Charlemagne. In vague terms the Pope's morals and sincerity were attacked. This was an opportunity for the King of the Franks to exercise his office of patrician. He had the Pope escorted to Rome with great honor and gave orders that an inquiry should be started without waiting for his arrival. The affair was dragging on for months when (November 29, 800), Charlemagne himself arrived in Rome. He began by paying his homage to the Sovereign Pontiff; then he summoned the bishops present, the abbots, the Roman nobility, and the Frankish nobility to meet in St. Peter's Church in public assembly.

When called upon to set forth and prove their charges against the Pope, the accusers were silent. The assembly dared not make a decision in any sense whatever, declaring, as another council three centuries before had done in a similar matter, "that the Apostolic See has the right to judge everyone, but that it can be judged by no one."³⁸ A noble act by the Roman Pontiff put an end to the trial. Leo III arose and said: "I intend to follow in the footsteps of my predecessors. I am ready to justify my conduct by an oath." The next day, in the presence of the whole people, the Pope solemnly declared, from the pulpit in St. Peter's that, freely and spontaneously, without being forced thereto by any law or custom, and without establishing any precedent for the future, he swore, with his hands upon the holy Gospels, that he was innocent of the crimes with which he had been charged. Says his biographer: "Then all the arch-

³⁸ *Ab ipsa Sede nos omnes judicamur: ipsa autem a nemine judicatur, quemadmodum et antiquitus mos fuit. Lib. pont., II, 7.*

bishops, bishops, and abbots, and all the clergy chanted a litany and praised God and our Lady Mary ever Virgin, and blessed Peter Prince of Apostles, and all the saints of Paradise.”³⁹

It was evident that in this affair Charlemagne’s intervention was decisive. It alone had succeeded in repressing the audacity of the calumniators. The powerful and impartial protector that Rome needed justified the high hopes which the Pope and the Roman people had placed in him.

Two days later the King of the Franks and the Supreme Pontiff were again in St. Peter’s Basilica to celebrate the feast of Christmas. They were surrounded by the élite of the Frankish and Roman nobility, in the midst of an immense throng of the people. Charlemagne prostrated himself. While Charlemagne was kneeling in prayer before the confession of St. Peter, the Pope placed a precious crown on his head. The crowd, apprised of the event, with one voice shouted: “To Charles, Augustus, crowned by God, great and peaceful emperor of the Romans, long life and victory”⁴⁰

³⁹ *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁰ The account of this great event is given by all the chronicles of the period. A few slight divergences are barely discernible in the narrative. The Roman source (the *Liber pontificalis*) emphasizes the Pope’s initiative in the matter (*Lib. pont.*, II, 7). The Frankish sources (*Annales de Lorsch, de Moissac*) remark that Charlemagne was crowned as the lawful successor of the Roman Empire, and that the Pope “adored” him, that is, rendered him the homage due to a sovereign (*Hist. des Gaules*, V, 78 f.). Einhard’s account stresses the acclaim of the Roman people. Einhard, a man of letters, seems to take pleasure in seeing the old Rome acclaim the new Empire. Perhaps we would be resorting to a forced interpretation of these various texts if we thought to see, even as a tendency, in this event the manifestation of the doctrines which later divided the Middle Ages: the Roman doctrine of St. Gregory VII, the imperial doctrine of Henry IV, and the democratic doctrine of Rienzi. But it is interesting to note these significant divergences.

Some writers have maintained that the re-establishment of the Empire was the work of Leo III’s policy, that he hastily placed the crown on Charlemagne’s head so as to mark his supremacy and the dependence of the king of the Franks. Thus, so we are told, we should explain Einhard’s passage which says that, if Charlemagne had known that he was to be crowned, he would not have entered the church (*Hist. des Gaules*, V, 100). But this interpretation is unlikely. It does not accord with the character of St. Leo III and of Charlemagne. Furthermore, Einhard and Paul the Deacon allude to preliminary negotiations. Charlemagne’s displeasure, mentioned by

The Christmas Day of the year 800, which closed the eighth century, not only opened a new century;⁴¹ it would begin a new era in the history of the Church and of the world.

The Holy Roman Empire

The Holy Roman German Empire was founded. Let us weigh these four words; they sum up the whole political organization of the Middle Ages. The new power had something holy and sacred about it. It was a pope who conferred it by coronation. This institution of coronation was destined to develop. When it reached its definite form, it became the expression and guaranty of a social harmony in which the rights of the Church and the rights of the people were reconciled with the urgent need for unity and authority.⁴² Charlemagne's empire was likewise holy in the mission it assumed to protect holy things. This idea formed the substance of a discourse delivered by the Emperor in 802 at the assembly of Aachen.⁴³

Furthermore, the power created on Christmas Day in the year 800 was a true empire, that is, a universal power. It is beyond question that Leo III intended to institute not an emperor of the West, but an emperor of Christendom.⁴⁴ And ap-

Einhard, may be simply a formula of humility, or it can be explained by the Frankish King's desire to postpone the ceremony until the close of the diplomatic negotiations he was then undertaking with the Eastern Court. St. Leo's eagerness is to be explained by a desire to avoid a repetition of scenes like those of 799.

An altogether opposite view is expressed by Sickel, that Charlemagne was invited to assume the office of emperor by an election of the Roman people. Wilhlem Ohr successfully refutes this legend. *La leggendaria elezione di Carlo Magno imperatore*.

⁴¹ The year then began on December 25.

⁴² See Luchaire, *Les institutions monarchiques de la France*, I, 71 f., for the form of oath drawn up under Philip I. The coronation was also useful as a means of obtaining the continuity of the work of the kings at a time when the principle of heredity was not yet definitely accepted (it did not prevail until the end of the twelfth century). The possible succession was assured by having the heir presumptive crowned and thereby accepted by the nation. Luchaire, *op. cit.*, I, 66 f., 86 f.

⁴³ *MGH*, III, 101 f.

⁴⁴ Kleinclausz, *L'Empire carolingien, ses origines et ses transformations*, pp. 199, 206 f., 209. Cf. *Le Moyen Age*, January-February, 1904. France and England re-

parently it was Charlemagne's intention, reversing what Constantine had done, to bring back the capital of the Empire from Constantinople to Rome. But the Byzantine emperors would not give up their claims; throughout the Middle Ages two emperors, with very different influences, claim to rule over the entire Christian world.⁴⁵

By its capital, which was Rome, by its political organization and the bonds uniting it to the bishop of Rome, the new Empire was indeed Roman. Bryce, in his *Holy Roman Empire* says:

These vast domains, reaching from the Ebro to the mountains of Hungary, were the conquests of the Frankish sword. But the conception of the Empire, that which made it a state and not a mere mass of subject tribes like those great Eastern dominions which rise and perish

mained outside the imperial organization after the restoration of the Empire by Otto I. These nations, submissive to the pope, did not accept the domination of the emperor: "The king of France is emperor in his kingdom" ("Tract on the papal, imperial, and royal power," in Goldart, *Monarchia*, I, 44). It is also a fact that the popes continued to deal with the Byzantine sovereigns as with real emperors. This is evidenced by their whole correspondence in the ninth and tenth centuries.

⁴⁵ Apparently this conflict between the East and the West was the occasion for the composition of the so-called *Donation of Constantine*, by which the Christian Emperor, cured of leprosy by the prayers of Pope St. Sylvester, invested him and his successors with the sovereignty of Italy and assigned to them a series of dignities and privileges, such as the right to wear the diadem, the neckband, and the purple mantle, and to receive from the emperor the service of equerry (*officium stratoris*) when mounting his horse (*Corpus juris canonici, Decreti prima pars, distinctio 96, cap. 13, 14*). The apocryphal character of this document, inserted in the *Corpus juris*, is beyond doubt. In the sixteenth century, Cardinal Baronius regarded it as a fabrication from end to end. In fact, the document is not mentioned anywhere before the ninth century. It is contradicted by important evidence, such as that of Ammianus Marcellinus who in 379 was acquainted with only one source of the wealth of the popes, the gifts of the faithful. This document first appears inserted in a *Vita Sylvestri*, which all scholars now regard as a legendary work. The intrinsic characteristics of the document make it suspect: the decree itself, probably drawn up in the East in the fourth century, shows evidence of having been rewritten in the West in the eighth or ninth century: offices and dignities are mentioned which were known only in the West; the *officium stratoris*, which it speaks of, is a Western practice and certainly posterior to Constantine. It speaks of "Italy or the Western provinces"; but this expression is comprehensible in the eighth or ninth century, not in the fourth. For a complete discussion, see Döllinger, *Papstfäbeln*.

in a lifetime, was inherited from an older and a grander polity, and had in it an element which was Roman rather than Teutonic—Roman in its striving after the uniformity and precision of a well-ordered administration, which should subject the individual to the system and realize perfection through the rule of law. And the bond, too, by which the Empire was chiefly held together was Roman in its origin, although Roman in a sense which would have surprised Trajan or Severus, could it have been foretold them. The unity of the Empire was a reflection of the unity of the Church.⁴⁶

In certain respects this Holy Roman Empire deserved to be called a German empire. It was German in the customs and practices that prevailed at court and among the people. At court Charlemagne kept up the German dress, language, and usages. Only twice, and on those occasions at the suggestion of Adrian and of Leo III, Charlemagne dressed in the chlamys and the shoes of patricians. He preferred to wear an otter skin doublet. He composed a Teutonic grammar and a national calendar, was fond of hearing in his palace barbarian songs that celebrated the heroes of the North, and ordered a collection to be made of those heroic poems for posterity.⁴⁷

The Carolingian Empire was German in its actual capital. Charlemagne did not fix his capital at Rome or Pavia or any of the big cities of Gaul. He preferred to live in his palace at Aachen, in the heart of Austrasia, close to the old paternal domain of Heristal. There it was he had brought the marble art treasures from Ravenna.

Charlemagne's Empire was German also in its private law. It is true that in the new Empire the public law and the administrative law were Roman, but civil and penal law, as also civil and criminal procedure, were inspired by the old usages of the Germans. Charlemagne wished it so. He gradually altered the old barbarian laws, but he did not abolish them. With

⁴⁶ James Bryce, *The Holy Roman Empire*, p. 73.

⁴⁷ On Charlemagne's fondness for using the national dress, see the Monk of St. Gall, *Hist. des Gaules*, V, 121.

his deep and prudent regard for tradition, in his laws he preserved the practice of the wergeld or money compensation. He did not suppress even the judiciary combat or the "judgment of God" in general.⁴⁸ Frederick Ozanam, referring to this matter, says: "It was the mark of a great mind to be able to exercise restraint, even in good, to be able to wait and to let ferment for a few centuries more that leaven of barbarism which would be the vigor of the new nations."⁴⁹

The Holy Roman German Empire, inaugurated by Charlemagne, did not last long. We shall presently see it break up, shortly after the great Emperor's death, in the lamentable fratricidal strifes, which were as harmful to the Church as they were to society in general.

But the work of the Holy Roman Empire did not altogether perish. The barbarian races attached to the soil and introduced to a strong social organization, the idea of the revived empire, the possibility of a confederation of the Christian peoples of Europe, the actual merging of the Roman, German, and Christian elements—this much remained from the Carolingian Empire: it was the whole Middle Ages; in germ, it was the whole of modern civilization.

⁴⁸ Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, 23, 26, 28, 29; *Hist. des Gaules*, V, 98–100.

⁴⁹ Ozanam, *Études germaniques*, II, 427. But Charlemagne did not hesitate to suppress customs that were too openly contrary to Christian morality, such as the *faida*, a sort of vendetta among the Germans (Esmein, *Hist. du droit français*, p. 92). He spread the use of the judiciary oath (Esmein, p. 98 f.).

CHAPTER XIII

Charlemagne and the Church

CHARLEMAGNE himself set forth his mission with regard to the Church. In a letter to Pope Leo III, he says: "It is my office, with the aid of the divine goodness, to defend the holy Church of Christ against the attacks of infidels from without, and to sustain it within by the profession of the Catholic faith."¹ This sentence might serve as an epitaph of his reign.

Political Instability

Against external foes, Charlemagne gave the Church the territorial, political, and social security which it needed to fulfil its divine mission. When he ascended the throne, it could truthfully be said that, in spite of the persistent efforts of Pepin the Short, disorder and insecurity prevailed everywhere. The piracy of the Normans and the raids of the Saxons on the northern frontiers, the ceaseless movements of the Slavic and Mongolian races on the east, and the Saracen invasions on the south were a ceaseless menace to the very existence of Christianity. Charlemagne's remarkable military campaigns, followed by the establishment of military "marches" along the frontiers, soon reassured Europe against these dangers. But the stirrings of anarchy that persisted in the political and social institutions created other obstacles to Christian life.² The power

¹ *Nostrum est, secundum auxilium divinae pietatis, sanctam ubique Christi Ecclesiam ab incursu paganorum et ab infidelium devastatione armis defendere foris, et intus catholicae fidei agnitione munire. MGH, Epistolae Karolini aevi, II, 93.*

² Now accepted as proved, is the fact that the institutions of Europe in the eighth century were a chaos of all the elements out of which the future societies would be

of the kings was ill defined; theoretically it was unlimited.³ True, the power of the assemblies, of the nobles, and of simple subjects was likewise vague.⁴ The old individualist spirit of the German races often led to conspiracies and revolts. Social inequalities, based on the old distinction between the *romanus homo* and the *francus homo*⁵ and complicated by the titles and distinctions which the beginning of feudalism created,⁶ a tangled maze of property rights,⁷ a chaos of laws and customs

formed. What proves this fact, as Guizot (*History of Civilization in Europe*, p. 66) long ago observed, is the discussion among historians about the question of determining what system of organization was dominant at that period. The discussion which Guizot speaks of is still going on and has divided scholars like Waitz, Fustel de Coulanges, Esmein, Viollet, each of them advancing authentic texts in favor of his view. We must conclude that the elements which they speak of coexisted in a changing and unstable equilibrium, hard to grasp, impossible to define. The age was witnessing a fermentation of the feudal régime, of monarchical institutions and communal liberties, amalgamated with the Roman law in decline and the Frankish law in formation.

³ Under the Merovingians the royal power did not yet possess a fixed character. Some have held that it was hereditary (Fustel de Coulanges) and that it was elective (Wilhelm Sickel). The truth seems to be that the matter was far from being clearly defined. Luchaire with exactness sums up the results of the latest labors of Fustel, Sickel, Waitz, and Flach. He says: "Nothing was more indeterminate or fluctuating during that period of beginnings, than the relations of royalty and feudalism from the point of view of the election of the ruler." *Les institutions monarchiques de l'Ancienne France*, I, 60 f.

⁴ Ozanam maintains that the authority of the fields of March or of May was real. Fustel de Coulanges asserts that it was not real, although he acknowledges that, when the king proposed a law to his assembled people, "he must have heeded their wishes. . . . A sort of tacit and unexpressed vote took place in the midst of that throng. . . . These men had to be reckoned with." *Institutions politiques de l'ancienne France*, I, 487. *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, January 1, 1876, p. 139. Possibly the public law varied. Those fields of March may have been sometimes mere reviews, as Fustel thinks they were. At other times they may have really passed laws.

⁵ This distinction of Frank and Roman stirred up disputes (Fustel de Coulanges, *op. cit.*, pp. 548, 609). Perhaps we should hold, with Paul Fournier, that the terms *francus* and *romanus homo* had different meanings in different periods. Much inconsistency seems to have existed on this point as in many other matters.

⁶ The Roman clientage (*clientela*, *fidelitas*, *defensio*) combined with the Germanic maimburg (Mundeburg). Below the rank of marquises or margraves, were counts and dukes, freemen, vassals, freedmen, and slaves. But we should note that these classes were not fixed, that men easily passed from one class to another, and that the reciprocal relations of the classes were ill defined.

⁷ At this period we find three types of land ownership: 1. collective ownership, of Germanic origin; but in the time of Charlemagne it was becoming more and more

—all these were additional obstacles to the influence of the Church. The situation was fortunate when the public officials did not abuse their power by injecting trouble in the hierarchy.⁸

Charlemagne's clear-sighted and firm genius soon untangled all these evils that were afflicting Christian society and applied suitable remedies.

Principles of Government

After his elevation to the imperial dignity, one of his first acts was to require of all his subjects a new oath of allegiance, not now as their king, but as Caesar. He explained that this new oath implied broader duties than those to which they had formerly pledged themselves. He said that what they must especially promise him was to live as good Christians.⁹ For some time Charlemagne had been reading chiefly St. Augustine's *City of God* and therein had found the ideal of his empire. He thought the best guaranty of loyal and faithful service to their king and their country was a loyal and faithful service to their God. It is to be noted that he always undertook a reform of morals before attempting a reform of the laws. Even when he had to put down a restless or rebellious aristocracy, precarious, until, according to Esmein's expression, it formed "only islets lost in the midst of a country constituted in the Roman manner" (*Histoire du droit français*, pp. 90 f.); 2. independent private ownership, of Roman origin; this becomes the allodial tenure or freehold, which continued through feudal society as an anomaly, an exception to the rule of "no land without a lord"; 3. dependent or feudal ownership.

⁸ Says Kurth: "The Church had so much wealth and influence that it was certain to arouse the jealousy of the kings. . . . They were alarmed at the prodigious growth of the Church. It was impossible for them to check it; to do so would have been to resist the universal tendency of society. . . . What was easier, or at least more tempting, was to put it under their tutelage. This was the policy of the Merovingian kings, and in that period the Church was exposed to no greater danger than to become the plaything and tool of their despotism." *Les origines de la civilisation moderne*, II, 144 f.

⁹ *Primum ut unusquisque et persona propria se in sancto Dei servitio, secundum Dei praeceptum et secundum sponsionem suam, pleniter conservare studeat.* MGH, *Capitularia* (Boretius ed.), p. 92.

he tried to conquer savage and sullen hearts by a moderate terror,¹⁰ tempered with Christian charity.

At more frequent intervals he held the national assemblies, to which he invited the whole population.¹¹ This close contact with the nation was one of the chief means of government used by Charlemagne. There he sounded public opinion and ascertained the state of mind of his people. As we are told by his cousin Adelard, "he might be seen passing from group to group, light-hearted with the young people, sympathizing with the griefs of the old people, talking to one and all with the utmost affability."¹²

There was no law putting limits to the monarch's power, but the power itself fixed such limits and respected them. Charlemagne wished in all matters to act only with the consent of the people. . . . In his mind the law should be merely the result of an accord between the ruler and the subjects, and the expression of their united will. It was this view of his that prompted one of his successors to utter this fine principle: *lex consensu populi fit et constitutione regis*.¹³ When we com-

¹⁰ Nithard, I, 1; *MGH, Scriptores*, II. Yet Charlemagne, when he thought the public welfare was involved, did not hesitate to adopt most energetic measures. He suppressed the duchies of Bavaria and of Aquitania, and turned them into simple provinces of the Empire.

¹¹ On the presence of the people and the part taken by them, Waitz and Fustel de Coulanges are not in accord. Waitz attributes an active rôle to the popular element. Fustel de Coulanges maintains that the people exercised no influence. It seems that the king could not neglect to take account of a popular opinion which he himself solicited and which he provoked to show itself.

¹² *Compatiundo senioribus, congaudendo junioribus . . . occupatus erat*. Hincmar, *De ordine palatii*, chap. 35.

¹³ "The law is made by the consent of the people and the constitution of the king." Baluze, II, 177. Mention is made of the *consensus populi* in several other documents. Cf. Hincmar, *De ordine*, chap. 8; Boretius, *Capitularenkritik*, p. 53. This notion of the law was already in the *Etymologies* of St. Isidore of Seville, Bk. II, chap. 10; Bk. V, chaps. 10, 21. Some writers hold that we should not take this word *consensus* literally, because in the language of the time "to consent" meant almost "obey" (Lavissee, *Histoire de France*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 312). But the documents seem to attach a real importance to this popular consent. Thus, when some of the people concerned were unable to be present at the capitular assembly, traveling agents then

pare this Christian formula with the famous definition of the Digest (*quod principi placuit, legis habet vigorem*),¹⁴ we can form some idea of the progress realized for human liberty under the auspices of the Gospel, since the dark days when Ulpian codified the axioms of pagan government for the use of despotism.¹⁵

It was from these assemblies that issued Charlemagne's celebrated capitularies. To persons accustomed to the rigid systematization of modern codes, at first glance these capitularies seem a shapeless mass of regulations, counsels, and maxims of prodigious and surprising diversity. But we must remember that contemporaries found in those laws the end of many a conflict, the solution of many practical problems. From the multitude of those concrete decisions, looking to the needs of daily life, Christian customs became fixed in the nation. If we imagine ourselves in the social environment of that period, among those German warriors, so ready to turn discussions into bloody fights, so jealous of letting anyone else avenge a personal affront, we can appreciate the influence of the Church when we see such men accept, in a certain Field of May, the absolute prohibition against carrying arms,¹⁶ and hear them acclaim this thoroughly Christian maxim: No person shall be put to death except by virtue of the law.¹⁷ The application of these laws and regulations was supervised by royal commissioners, called *missi dominici*.

went to obtain their approbation at home, *ut populus interrogetur de capitulis quae in lege noviter addita sunt* (Capitulary of Aix, 803, *Reg. Carol.*, no. 396). If the notification was not given, the people refused to obey and regarded the capitulary as null and void (*Epist. Carol.*, no. 27). At other times, the people took the initiative in the matter of the capitulary, which the king accepted. Capitulary of Pavia, 856. *Populus noster nobis quasdam petitiones obtulit, quas nos . . . capitula conscribi fecimus.*

¹⁴ "Whatever the prince is pleased to decree has the force of law."

¹⁵ Kurth, *Les origines de la civilisation moderne*, II, 256 f.

¹⁶ Baluze, I, 449; Boretius, I, 156.

¹⁷ *Non occidatur homo nisi iubente lege*, Boretius, p. 59.

Attitude to the Church

In the capitularies and in the instructions given the *missi*, it is evident that the Emperor was much concerned with ecclesiastical matters, that he was somewhat excessive in watching over the life of the clergy and correcting them, that he regulated Church ceremonies in a manner that was at times unwise. By and large, however, the clergy gladly accepted the interference of him who was called "the defender and auxiliary of holy Church in all her needs,"¹⁸ and who never forgot the principle of the independence of the spiritual power. Alcuin, his adviser, writes: "Altogether distinct are the temporal power and the spiritual power; the one carries in its hand the sword of death, the other bears on its lips the keys of life; to the priest belongs the office of preaching, to the others the duty of listening humbly and of following the admonitions given; it is the office of secular princes to defend the Church; it is the office of the Church to draw down upon them the graces of God."¹⁹ In general Charlemagne adapted his conduct to these principles. Wishing to attach to his person, as chaplain, a certain bishop of his kingdom, he did so only after obtaining the authorization of Pope Adrian I.²⁰ Having respect for ecclesiastical rights and privileges, "he never established new dioceses, never changed dioceses into archdioceses, never allowed a bishop to exercise episcopal functions outside his own diocese, without permission of the local bishop. He himself asked for authorization in such cases."²¹

Although sometimes his addresses to the people were in the

¹⁸ Baluze, I, 189; Boretius, I, 44.

¹⁹ *PL*, C, 155.

²⁰ *Capitul. reg. francor.*, chap. 53. Baluze, I, 270; Boretius, I, 78.

²¹ Thomassin, *Ancienne et nouvelle discipline*, VII, 303 f. The following words of an eminent historian seem to be an exaggeration: "Charlemagne is the head of the Church as he is the head of the state; he is the head of the bishops as well as the head of the counts. Between the Church and the state he made no distinction." Kleinclausz, in Lavissee, *Histoire de France*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 316.

manner of real sermons, yet this was because the great statesman thought that social peace depended largely upon each person living as a faithful Christian. Several of his capitularies end with an exhortation to belief in the almighty Father, the incarnate Word, the light-giving Spirit, and the Catholic Church. In 802, at the great assembly at Aachen, he declared: "Beloved brethren, listen. We have been sent here for your salvation, to urge you to follow exactly the law of God, and to turn you, in justice and mercy, to obedience to the laws of this world." In a clear, brief summary, he sketched what must be believed and practiced in order to be saved and then enumerated the chief duties of the poor and the rich, of bishops and abbots, of counts and dukes. Then he concluded his address thus: "This life is short, and the hour of death is uncertain. . . . Lord, grant us success in this life, and the eternity of the future life with your saints. May God keep you, beloved brethren."²²

Charlemagne considered that he had a mission within the Church, but this he understood as a mission of respectful and devoted aid. In the capitularies promulgated by him, in the decisions of the councils that he convoked, in the instructions he gave his *missi*, Charlemagne often took up the question of the internal organization of the Church, its hierarchy, its public worship, its property, its works of charity and education, and even its theological discussions. For the most part he did this with admirable prudence.

Charlemagne and the Bishops

He paid the greatest honors to the popes, bowing before their spiritual supremacy and, in matters of faith, considering his sole duty to see that due respect was shown for the faith that came from Rome. He restored to ecclesiastical authority the appointment of bishops. In his first capitulary of 803, he says:

²² *PL*, XCVII, 239-242.

Aware of the sacred canons and purposing that, in the name of God, holy Church may freely exercise her privileges, we have given our assent that bishops be elected, according to the canonical statutes, by the choice of the clergy and people, in the diocese itself, without any regard for persons or gifts, simply for the merit of their life and wisdom, so that, by their example and their discourses, they may be able to direct fully those who are subject to them.²³

Even after this decree, it is true that the Emperor was not unconcerned with the choice of bishops: the election took place before an imperial *missus*, and often the latter named a candidate in behalf of the Emperor. In any event, the bishop-elect was never consecrated until the imperial approbation had been received.²⁴ But the Emperor rarely abused his influence for the appointment of bishops to the hurt of ecclesiastical discipline.²⁵ And so the Church did not protest against his interference. It was even willing that he should make use of his great authority for the correction of abuses in the ranks of the episcopacy. In one capitulary we read: "Our *missi* must diligently learn whether there be any complaints against a bishop, an abbot, an abbess, a count, or any other official, and inform us." Another capitulary (812) says: "Let bishops, abbots, counts, or any others in high position, if they have any disputes among them which they cannot settle, come before us."²⁶

Charlemagne's acts of interference in ecclesiastical affairs, although at the time favorable to the interest of the Church and therefore tacitly approved by her, had harmful consequences. They created precedents which other rulers, less well disposed toward the papacy, took abusive advantage of. Louis XIV and

²³ Baluze, I, 779; Boretius, I, 276.

²⁴ Thomassin, *op. cit.*, Part II, Bk. II, chap. 20; *Des élections épiscopales sous l'empire de Charlemagne*, IV, 278 ff.

²⁵ See the anecdotes related by the monk of St. Gall, I, 4, 6; *Hist. des Gaules*, V, 107-109.

²⁶ Capitulary of 812, Baluze, I, 497; Boretius, I, 176.

Napoleon I appealed to Charlemagne's conduct to justify their own.

Under the episcopacy was the body of priests. Ordinarily they lived in community, some of them with the bishop, others in a *presbyterium* under the guidance of a priest of advanced years.²⁷ The number of rural parishes increased, and city parishes were established.²⁸ The chorepiscopi consecrated the country churches that were most remote from the episcopal city and there confirmed children and adults and reconciled the penitents.²⁹ The rural parishes were grouped into archdeaconries, governed by archdeacons and probably subdivided into deaneries.³⁰

In accord with Charlemagne, thirty-three councils discussed the questions of clerical discipline. They reminded priests of their duty to give the people simple, informal instruction, to visit the sick, to treat penitents in the confessional in a fatherly manner, to watch over the maintenance of public penance. In enforcing this penance the civil officers, in case of need, were to lend their assistance. When he judged it useful, the Emperor personally took a hand in the matter to remind the clergy of their duties of state. But even when he addressed the lower clergy, who had no prestige but that of their spiritual office, Charlemagne did so with religious deference. At the beginning of one capitulary, addressed to the priests of his states, he says: "My brethren and my sons, I commend to your attention these few chapters which I have had drawn up."³¹ When

²⁷ Thomassin, *Ancienne et nouvelle discipline*, II, 482 f.

²⁸ Until recently, writers maintained that the urban parishes dated only from the twelfth or thirteenth century. Schöfer has proved from texts (in *Römische Quartalschrift*, first and second trimester of 1905) that the city parishes date from the Frankish period. Cf. *Rev. quest. hist.*, October, 1905, p. 645.

²⁹ Public penance was still in vigor in the time of Charlemagne. Half a century later, Hincmar protested against its decline. *PL*, CXXV, 802.

³⁰ The first mention of deans is found in the works of Hincmar of Reims. Probably they existed before him. *PL*, CXXV, 771 ff.

³¹ *PL*, XCVII, 275.

there was question of taking some step of major importance, he consulted the supreme pontiff. In 799, with regard to an accusation against some priests, he informed the bishops that he had consulted the Pope and that he would conform to the decisions that would come from Rome.³²

St. Chrodegang

The most effective of these reform measures was the encouragement which Charlemagne gave to the Rule of St. Chrodegang. This saint belonged to one of the noblest of the Frankish families. He had been a chancellor of Charles Martel and ambassador of Pepin the Short to Aistulf king of the Lombards. As bishop of Metz, Chrodegang succeeded in gathering about his cathedral the clergy of his episcopal city and organizing them into a religious community. Recitation of the divine office in common, enclosure for their residence, sleeping in a common dormitory, study and teaching in the time left free from the ministry, in all things the practice of humility—such were the main provisions of the Rule drawn up in thirty-four chapters by the holy reformer of the clerical life in the eighth century. The clergy who lived according to this Rule were called “regulars” (*canonici*, canons),³³ and their manner of life was called *vita canonica*.

Charlemagne was sure to be interested in an institution of this sort. He should have liked to see all the clergy become

³² *Unde ad consulendum Patrem nostrum Leonem papam sacerdotes nostros mittimus. Et quicquid ab eo vel a suis perceperimus, vobis . . . renuntiare non tardabimus.* Baluze, I, 327. We do not see how Guizot could write without qualification: “To speak truly, we must say that, from Pepin the Short to Louis the Debonnaire, it was the temporal power, king or emperor, that governed the Church.” *Histoire de la civilisation en France*, II, 294 (lesson 26).

³³ We find this word *canonicus* taken in this sense for the first time in a constitution of St. Boniface, art. 15. Mansi, XII, appendix, p. 108. St. Eusebius of Vercelli and St. Augustine had already gathered about them in a common life the clergy of their episcopal cities. Primitively the word *canonicus* signified simply a cleric whose name was inscribed in the *canon* or tablet of a church. Council of Nicaea, canon 16.

monks or canons.³⁴ After the example of St. Chrodegang, some bishops of France, Germany, England, and Italy instituted chapters of canons regular in their cathedrals. The Rule of St. Chrodegang, supplemented by Amalarius a priest of Metz, was approved and recommended by the Council of Aachen in 816.³⁵

Monasticism

Charlemagne was a friend of the monks even more than he was of the canons. Einhard relates that Charlemagne should have liked to end his days in the habit of St. Benedict. At least he did carry out the happy thought of introducing the Benedictine Rule into all the monasteries of his Empire. But his inspiration was less lofty when he wanted to provide for the government of the abbeys with a political end in view. Thus it happened that after his victory over Tassilon duke of Bavaria, he turned the Bavarian abbeys over to Frankish bishops. He distributed certain wealthy monasteries to his friends and to officers that he wished to reward. Alcuin, for example, had five abbeys.³⁶

Those warriors, those men of the world, did not always give to the monks an example suited to the duties of their holy state. Of these monks, several had entered the monastery to avoid the burdens of the military and civil life. In the diocese of Orleans, the holy Bishop Theodulph bewailed the sight of the St. Mesmin monastery being vacated by real monks and occu-

³⁴ Capitulary of 805; Baluze, I, 296.

³⁵ On the spread of the canonical life and its development, see Hefele, *Histoire des conciles*, Vol. V. The institution of the canonesses, approved by the same Council of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle), made its appearance, at almost the same time, as a mitigation of the religious life.

³⁶ The French Benedictines have always held that the Rule of St. Benedict was implanted at Glanfeuil the very year of his death by his disciple St. Maurus. Molinier and Helphen, opposing this view, maintain that the Maurus whose sarcophagus was discovered at Glanfeuil is not the Maurus who was St. Benedict's disciple. Cf. *Rev. hist.*, July-August, 1905; *Rev. quest. hist.*, October 1, 1905.

pied by seculars of scandalous life.³⁷ The monks of Ile-Barbe near Lyons, which the pious Archbishop Leidrade edified by his learning and virtues, was seduced by the errors of the Spaniard Felix of Urgel regarding the divinity of Christ.³⁸ Those of St. Denis near Paris had forsaken the monastic habit and adopted the rule of the canons, finding that more convenient.³⁹ St. Aldhelm, in his valuable work, *De laudibus virginittatis*, paints an unflattering picture of the life of an abess of his time.⁴⁰ One of Charlemagne's capitularies, published in 789, alludes to the most serious abuses: forced or insufficiently tested vocations, the vagabondage of the monks, the avarice of the cellarers, and other evils of this sort.⁴¹ Such disorders could not be repressed by disciplinary sanctions; an internal reform was the only thing capable of overcoming them.

St. Benedict of Aniane

It was from Charlemagne's entourage, from the ranks of his restless nobility, that the reformer would arise. Among the nobles whom Charlemagne had made his intimates, there was then a young lord, descended from the noble counts of Maguelone. His name was Benedict Witiza and at the Emperor's court he held the office of cupbearer. Valiant in war and brilliant at court, he was the hope of the army and the ornament of the palatine academy. A providential event abruptly changed the course of his life. In 774, during the Lombardy campaign, one of his brothers, a soldier like himself, imprudently attempting to cross a river, was carried away by the current. Benedict, seeing the danger, rode his horse into the stream and snatched his brother from death. But in so doing he himself risked the

³⁷ Theod., *Carmina*, II, 6; *PL*, CV, 312.

³⁸ Alcuin, *Epist.*, 90; *PL*, C, 287-294.

³⁹ Mabillon, *Annales*, II, 548.

⁴⁰ *PL*, LXXXIX, 105 ff.

⁴¹ Baluze, I, 241 f.; Boretius, I, 63.

greatest peril. He, too, was swept along and was drawn down under the water. When he saw himself so near death, the vanity of earthly things suddenly became apparent to him, and he promised God that, if he should be saved, he would consecrate his life to Him in the monastic life. He kept his word. From that moment his austerities became almost incredible.

They have been recounted by his faithful disciple and successor, Smaragdus, who sketches a lifelike portrait of that virile face, worthy of being placed between that of St. Benedict of Nursia and that of St. Bernard. We will merely translate a few passages from this account.

At that time there was a holy monk, named Vidmare, who was deprived of the light of day, but who shone with the light of the heart. Benedict told him his secret and received good advice from him. Setting out with his retinue as though intending to return to Aachen and reaching the monastery of Saint Seine, he dismissed his suite and entered the cloister to serve Christ. He had his hair cut off and received the monastic habit.

Then, for two years and a half, the new monk practiced amazing fasts. He strove against his body as one might against a wild beast. . . . While his brethren slept, he very quietly cleaned their shoes. . . . His long fasts made him pale and thin; his skin touched his bones or hung loose like the fetlock of cattle. . . . He was gentle and kind toward all; he had the gift of tears; he was especially kind to travelers, children, and the poor. Upon the death of the father abbot the monks elected Benedict unanimously to be their abbot. But he, dreading this honor, returned home and there, on his estate, beside the Aniane brook, built a small abode for himself and Vidmare, the saintly blind man.

People now flocked to him to share his holy life. Again the humble monk was alarmed. He wanted to flee once more, but Vidmare chided him and persuaded him to remain. The number of his disciples increased. The valley became too small. It was necessary to erect a monastery nearby. Benedict worked with the others in putting up the building; at times he prepared their food. He also wrote some books.

Because they had no cattle, the monks often had to carry the building material on their shoulders. Some serfs came to assist the builders, but the holy abbot would not admit them to his service and ordered them to be freed. Yet the novices grew in number, and the life of the brethren was one of perpetual love.⁴²

Any commentary would only weaken the strong colors and naïve grace of this picture. Soon Benedict, the holy abbot of Aniane, became celebrated. The report of his fame reached the ears of the Emperor, who summoned him to his court, profited by his wise counsel, and in 799 sent him to Spain to combat the heresy of adoptionism. Several bishops, likewise moved by his reputation for holiness, asked him for monks to serve as an example in their monasteries. He sent twenty monks to Leidrade archbishop of Lyons, to reform the monastery of Ile-Barbe. Theodulph bishop of Orleans obtained from him four monks, who restored to the abbey of St. Mesmin its former renown. Alcuin, who was united to St. Benedict of Aniane in bonds of friendship, with twenty of his disciples founded the abbey of Cormery in Touraine. To assure the fruits of his work, Benedict drew up the *Codex regularum* or *Concordantia regularum*,⁴³ a collection made up of the primitive Rule of St. Benedict and the various rules given to the monasteries since the beginning of the monastic life. The *Concordantia regularum* later became as famous as the first Rule of St. Benedict. Louis the Pious called St. Benedict of Aniane to the Council of Aachen and commissioned him to visit all the monasteries of his empire. Thus his work extended to most of the abbeys of the West.

One of the most famous colonies of Aniane was the monastery of Gellone or St. William of the Desert, founded by the celebrated William of Aquitaine, the conqueror of the Saracens, the friend and perhaps a relative of Charlemagne. When

⁴² *PL*, CIII, 353 ff.

⁴³ *PL*, CIII, 703-1380.

the valiant soldier, moved by grace, told his sovereign that he was going to end his days in the peace of the cloister, the Emperor embraced him and wept. But the Duke remained faithful to the divine call and withdrew to Gellone, where he edified all the monks by his spirit of poverty and humility.⁴⁴ The Frankish nobility, who were largely to blame for the decadence of the monastic life, owed a debt to the Church: Benedict of Aniane and William of Aquitaine paid it nobly.

Church Revenue

The high Church dignitaries were steadily becoming real seigneurs. In the eighth century, bishops and abbots were administrators of considerable property and income, which the firstfruits, the tithes, various dues established by custom and especially the free gifts of the faithful had put in their hands. Charlemagne decided to regulate the sources of these revenues, their administration, and the rights that were derived from them. He let fall into desuetude the old practice of the firstfruits, offerings in kind made by the faithful at the offertory. This custom was in full decline in the ninth century.⁴⁵ But he regulated the collection and division of the tithes and imposed this tax upon new converts. He declared that, in accordance with a decree of Pope Gelasius, the revenue must be equally divided between the bishop, the priests, the *fabrics* of each diocese, and the poor. He allowed the continuance of the practice of offerings by the people in connection with funerals, ordinations, and masses. In connection with funerals, Hincmar of Reims forbade the clergy to exact any payment, but permitted them to accept a voluntary offering. Charlemagne's attention was directed particularly to the fourth source of Church

⁴⁴ Mabillon, *Acta sanctorum O.S.B.*, sec. 4, part I; and *Acta sanctorum* (Bollandists), May 28.

⁴⁵ Thomassin, *Ancienne et nouvelle discipline*, Part III, Bk. I; Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, p. 183.

income, the gifts and legacies of the faithful. With solicitude and in a spirit of justice he saw to it that no one should be excessively generous to the Church to the harm of his natural heirs, and strictly forbade the clergy to divert Church property and income from the use originally intended for the benefit of their relatives. With particular care he organized two special forms of gifts made to churches: that of royal benefice and that of the *precaria*.

The Merovingian kings had often made unconditional grants of land to the churches. Charlemagne preferred to make these gifts under the title of benefice, that is, with a prohibition against their being alienated, disposed of, or transferred to others without restriction. Under the last of the Merovingians, individual landowners, endangered by the invasions, transferred the ownership of their property to some powerful protector, reserving to themselves the usufruct under the title of *precarium*. Under Charlemagne these *precaria* titles were often made in favor of churches, the heads of which appeared to be particularly paternal and generous. Some poor churches had formed *precaria* to powerful nobles. Charlemagne wished to prevent the alienation of Church property under this form and prohibited this kind of contract. At times the *precarium* took another form. An individual might ask of a bishop or abbot a piece of land to be cultivated; at his death, or after ten or twenty years, according to the terms of the contract, the land returned to the Church.⁴⁶ In this way considerable property was acquired by the Church. Certain prelates, such as Leidrade archbishop of Lyons, held several abbeys as benefices; Theodulph bishop of Orleans possessed the abbeys of Fleury and of St. Benedict (on the Loire); Alcuin, who was a simple cleric, not a bishop, received from Charlemagne the abbeys of

⁴⁶ Esmein, *Histoire du droit français*, 131-136. We should not confuse the *precaria* of the Middle Ages with the *precarium* of the Roman Law, an act by which a person ceded something to another while retaining the right to withdraw it at will. Esmein, *op. cit.*, pp. 132 f.

Ferrières, St. Loup of Troyes, St. Martin of Tours, and St. Josse, in the country of Ponthieu; Einhard was abbot of St. Peter of Ghent, St. Servais of Maastricht and of Fontenelle. It has been calculated that in the ninth century a third of the land was Church property.⁴⁷

But we should not forget that this property was sacred in its intended use as well as in its origin. It was the property of the poor, *res pauperum*. One of Charlemagne's capitularies contains the following: "We know that, according to the tradition of the holy fathers, the property of the Church, gifts of the people's piety and the price of the redemption of their sins, is the patrimony of the poor. Therefore we decree that never, whether in our reign or in that of our successors, is it to be permitted to diminish this property or alienate it to any extent whatever."⁴⁸ Certain ecclesiastical laws regulated the use of the Church revenue. A council of Aachen, held in 816, decreed that a hospital be founded beside each monastery and that it be placed in the charge of a man "to whom avarice is hateful and hospitality cherished, a man capable of giving to the poor all the care and relief that they need."⁴⁹ Again and again Charlemagne reminded the monks of their obligation to nourish the poor and travelers, and to admit them to their table; if they should squander the possession of the Church, they would be guilty of an abominable crime, because "he who does not nourish the poor is their murderer."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Roth, *Beneficialwesen*, p. 250; Waitz, *Deutsche Verfassungs-geschichte*, 2d ed., II, 219 note; Lesne, *La propriété ecclésiastique en France aux époques romaine et mérovingienne*.⁴¹

⁴⁸ Baluze, I, 717 f.

⁴⁹ *Quia res Ecclesiae oblationes sint fidelium, pretia peccatorum et patrimonia pauperum . . . ad portam monasterii . . . sit hospitale pauperum, cui etiam praesit talis qui et avaritiam oderit et hospitalitatem diligit . . . unde pauperes ibidem recreentur et foveantur*. Mansi, XIV, 276 f.

⁵⁰ Baluze, I, 503, 524, 534, 1171, 1293, etc.; 946, 1003, 1007, 1115; Boretius, I, 94, 96, 106, 332, 347, etc. A capitulary enumerates the principal institutions of public relief established at cathedrals and monasteries. They are the xenodochium, where travelers were received, the ptochotrophium, where the poor were fed, the nosoco-

Agriculture and Industry

These vast properties belonging to dioceses and abbeys were not only, in the eighth and ninth centuries, large establishments of public assistance; they stimulated agriculture by the *precarium* contracts and the perpetual emphyteutic leases (i. e., improvement leases) granted to small farmers.⁵¹ They were also a great encouragement to industry.

Industry prospered especially in the abbeys. At St. Peter of Corbie, under Adelard's administration, several "rooms" were occupied by different workers; in the first were three shoemakers, two saddlers, and one fuller; in the second were six blacksmiths, two goldsmiths, two shoemakers, a cutler, and a parchment-maker; in the others were masons, carpenters, and the like.

At first these workshops were located within the monasteries, and they supplied merely what was needed by those living there. But soon the abbots saw that profit might be derived by having things produced in excess of the amount needed for the monastery itself. Consequently they organized, outside the monastery boundaries, veritable industrial towns. The earliest we know of is the town of St. Riquier; its forges acquired a great reputation at the end of the eighth century. In 831, it was divided into eleven sections, each of which was inhabited by the workers of a single trade. Some groups counted several thousand persons. Many of our present cities owe their origin to this interesting development. The artisans were grouped into corporations. The existence of communities called guilds (*geldoniae*) or confraternities (*confratriae*) is proved by several capitularies and by the decrees of councils. They were charitable institutions and mutual insurance societies: their members pledged themselves under oath to give alms and

mium, where the sick were cared for, the orphanotrophium, where orphans were received and taken care of, the gerontoconium, where the indigent old people were given asylum, and the brephotrophium, where young children were cared for. Baluze, I, 446 f.

⁵¹ Esmein, *Les baux perpétuels des formules d'Angers et de Tours, Mélanges*, pp. 393 ff. See especially Imbart de la Tour, "Les colonies agricoles et l'occupation des terres désertes à l'époque carolingienne" in *Questions d'hist. soc. et rel.*, 1907, pp. 31-68.

mutual assistance in case of loss of their property by shipwreck or fire; each guild had its own feast day.⁵²

Commerce

Commercial transactions were also favored by the abbeys, by the population movements which centered around these houses, and by the feasts celebrated there.

In the neighborhood of the cities, abbeys, and important villas, public markets (*mercata publica*) were held, on any day except Sunday. The fairs coincided with the most celebrated pilgrimages, and began at the same time as the feast of the saint. Those of Champagne and Flanders do not go back that far. But the fair of St. Denis, confirmed by a charter of Pepin (October 3, 759), was flourishing. It was called *forum indictum*. It lasted four weeks to enable merchants of Spain, Provence, Lombardy, and other regions to attend. . . . Anglo-Saxon pilgrims passing through France under the protection of the Emperor were useful commercial agents. The chief ports through which they passed were Ghent, Duerstede, Ecluse, Boulogne, whose lighthouse guided the course of ships, and especially Quentovicus, which today is called either Etaples on the estuary of the Canche, or St. Josse-sur-Mer. A custom house, centralizing the taxes received in the various ports and maritime towns, was installed there under the direction of Gervold abbot of St. Wandrille.⁵³

Among the advantages which the people derived from these large patrimonies of the clergy, must be mentioned those that resulted from the right of sanctuary and from ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

Right of Sanctuary

Of all the privileges which the Merovingian kings granted to Church property, the principal one was immunity. Im-

⁵² Kleinclausz, in Lavissee, *Histoire de France*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 336.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 337 f. The Jews, who were not allowed to own land, at this period, rendered real services to commerce. But their traffic in slaves provoked the protests of Agobard archbishop of Lyons.

munity was not merely a partial or total exemption from financial obligations and military service; it was also the right to administer justice on ecclesiastical land.⁵⁴ Charlemagne made general what, under the Merovingians, had been granted by way of exception. He habitually added to every donation to the churches the privilege of immunity. The first consequence of this practice was the extension of the right of sanctuary. In all ages persons charged with crime who sought refuge in temples were considered free from arrest. But now lay justice was halted at the entrance to every domain of a diocese or abbey, made doubly sacred by its destined use and by the imperial immunity. To this refuge fled poor people pursued by the arm of the law.

At first this right of sanctuary was a salutary restraint upon outbursts of violence. Before long, however, it became an abuse. Charlemagne corrected this. He limited the right of sanctuary to the church building and its dependencies. He decided that a criminal seeking refuge on ecclesiastical land could be driven off it, that the lay count had a right to go there and make the arrest, and that the bishop who should oppose the exercise of such right would be subject to a fine.⁵⁵ He declared murderers undeserving of this benefit and ordered that they be forced to go out of the churches by their being refused food. Sanctuary rescued an accused from death, but did not exempt him from canonical penance or from episcopal jurisdiction. Charlemagne's purpose seemed to be to control and soften by the justice of the bishops the excessively harsh and impassioned justice of the lay counts.⁵⁶ This aim was partly attained by his

⁵⁴ In the acts this right is expressed in the following way: *audire causas, de fredo exigere* (*fredum*, that is, money composition, the old *Wergeld*). Cf. Fustel de Coulanges, who has thrown light on this point in his "Étude sur l'immunité mérovingienne," *Revue historique*, 1883, p. 249. Flach supplements the study of Fustel de Coulanges in *Les origines de l'ancienne France*, I, 183, 437.

⁵⁵ Capitulary of 803, arts. 2 and 3; Baluze, I, 388 f.; Boretius, I, 113.

⁵⁶ This is what he declares in his capitulary of 779, art. 11; Baluze, I, 197. On the

regulation of the right of sanctuary and by the extension he gave to the competence of episcopal jurisdiction.

In consequence of a feudal custom introduced at this period, the right to administer justice became inherent in land ownership. By this title the bishops ⁵⁷ could claim a right to administer justice on their lands. Charlemagne ratified and broadened that jurisdiction. He extended it even to crimes involving capital punishment. The bishops found it necessary to surround themselves with police officers and auxiliary judges, who were called *judices privati, villici, advocati*. Charlemagne was glad to make use of this personnel, in whom he found guaranties of knowledge and equity and to whom complainants and accused gladly gave their confidence. The *advocati* of the churches held an annual court of justice at which they administered justice, assisted by notables called good men, *boni homines*.⁵⁸ Thus "as the bishops and other ecclesiastics had the greatest authority in the courts of justice . . . the mild humaneness of the ecclesiastical laws overcame the rigor of the civil laws; in place of bloody punishments, merely salutary penalties began to be imposed."⁵⁹

Schools

On the lands of the Church, the two chief centers of civilization were the school and the church. In 789, Charlemagne, re-right of sanctuary, see Baluze, I, 98, 251, 539, 729, 840, 854, etc. See also Many, *De locis sacris*, pp. 94 ff., and Thomassin, *Ancienne et nouvelle discipline*, V, 482 ff.

⁵⁷ The property of each diocese was administered by the bishop. In each individual church the clergy of that church had merely the administration of the revenue assigned for the repair of the churches (*fabrica*). The beneficiaries had a certain right of administration of their benefice; but they had a right only to the usufruct. The only juridical personality of common right was the bishop. He was assisted by his priests and his deacons; but, in principle, he was supposed to count only upon God. Such was the law until 800. Charlemagne decided that the bishop must not withdraw anything from the treasury of the Church without the consent of the clergy, even to aid the poor or the serfs of the Church (Council of Tours, canon 11; Baluze, I, 503). In exceptional cases, the provincial councils examined the administration of the bishop. Thomassin, V, 534 ff.

⁵⁸ Flach, *Les origines de l'ancienne France*, I, 183, 347.

⁵⁹ Thomassin, V, 481.

newing a provision of a Vaison council (529), ordered priests to hold school in their parishes, to open it not only to the children of the serfs, but also to the children of freemen, and to teach them the psalter, chant, computation, and grammar.⁶⁰

Above these parish schools, which increased somewhat irregularly, rather numerous in some dioceses, almost none in others, were the episcopal schools and the monastic schools, where, until the Council of Aachen (817), outsiders were admitted to share in the instruction given to the novices. Beginning in 817, there were two kinds of monastic schools, some being for the novices and oblates, the others for the clerics and laity.⁶¹ The most famous of the episcopal and monastic schools were those directed by Theodulph at Orleans, Leidrade at Lyons, Gervold at St. Wandrille, Angilbert at St. Riquier, St. Benedict at Aniane. We know of the famous palatine school where, beside members of Charlemagne's family, were to be seen the most celebrated men of the time. These schools possessed a large number of books. It is well established that under Charlemagne the libraries contained many works of classical antiquity.⁶² It was Charlemagne's intention to found a new Athens, more beautiful than the ancient one, "the Athens of Christ."

Alcuin

The soul of this whole scholastic reform movement was an English cleric, Alcuin, whom Charlemagne met at Parma in 781 and attached to his person. Alcuin was born at York in 735 and made his studies at the episcopal school in the time of Egbert, a disciple of Venerable Bede. To the Gallic schools he brought the traditions and tried methods of the English schools. Strictly speaking, Alcuin was not a litterateur or a

⁶⁰ Baluze, I, 237; Boretius, I, 50-60.

⁶¹ Baluze, I, 585; Boretius, I, 346.

⁶² Boutaric, "De la connaissance des auteurs de l'antiquité pendant le Moyen Age," *Rev. des quest. hist.*, XVII, 20 ff.

philosopher or a learned scholar or in any sense an original thinker. He was a pedagogue, but a pedagogue who possessed a wonderful ability to adapt himself to his time and his pupils, the first of whom was Charlemagne himself. It has been truly said that "he was ahead of his times without ever separating from them."⁶³ His method consisted in giving to those inquiring minds, unacquainted with intellectual labor, a wealth of ideas, facts, and views, and in explaining them in a brief, clear manner easy to retain, even if in so doing it was necessary to employ a paradoxical, enigmatic, or pedantic form. This movement has received the name of Renaissance. It was especially a grammatical renaissance. Minds were not yet prepared for philosophical speculation. Besides, there were no means for promoting such speculations. Probably Alcuin had no knowledge of Greek, or at most very little. Aristotle was known only through Boethius' translation, and we are not sure that Boethius knew Aristotle completely. In any case his philosophy seems not to have been assimilated. But there was intense interest in St. Augustine. By the study of that great doctor, metaphysical reflection awoke. History was a more accessible study. Einhard, a former student at the abbey of Fulda, became renowned by his *Life of Charlemagne*.

Church Architecture

In Alcuin's mind, as in that of Charlemagne, the school was simply the vestibule of the Church. It was in the churches, by the sermons heard, by the liturgical ceremonies witnessed and performed, by the paintings and statues there seen, that the complete education of minds and hearts would take place. Charlemagne built, repaired, and raised from their ruins a great number of churches. Religious architecture had no special and characteristic style at that epoch. The Carolingian

⁶³ Guizot, *Histoire de la civilisation en France*, II, 180 (lesson 22).

church marks a transition from the ancient basilica, Roman or Byzantine, to the Romanesque church. The ground plan was oblong or in the shape of a cross, rarely circular or polygonal. The building had arched windows and was often embellished with Byzantine ornamentation. The lantern of the Merovingian period was retained and developed, and in it were put the bells, the use of which was taken from Italy. The windows remained open or were closed with lattice-work of stone or wood, as in the Church of St. Germain-des-Pres at Paris. Before long, glass windows added a new and original ornament to these openings.⁶⁴ Inside, the main altar was brought forward to the middle of the choir and was encompassed by other altars at the base of the pilasters.

A church without a relic was not to be thought of. A council held in 816 orders that, lacking any relics, a church must have a consecrated host deposited in it.⁶⁵ Henceforth we have the fusion of the cemetery church of the first centuries, erected upon the tomb of a martyr to honor him, and the church as a place of worship, built to meet the needs of the people. The practice developed of holding regular meetings in the cemetery churches and not to consecrate any church for the needs of worship without placing therein some souvenir of a martyr or of our Lord, though it be a fragment of the Gospel or the Holy Eucharist.

Clerical Dress

In these churches, a respectful crowd of people, feeling much at home, kept coming and going, staying to pray or to talk, and, in spite of the canons, sometimes to sell their mer-

⁶⁴ The first mention of stained glass is found in the note on St. Leo III in the *Liber pontificalis: Fenestras de absida (basilicae Salvatoris) ex vitro diversis coloribus decoravit atque conclusit* (*Lib. pont.*, II, 25). But stained glass has been found that seems to go back to the fourth century. Leclercq, *Manuel d'archéologie chrétienne*, II 499. The leading of glass does not appear until the eleventh century.

⁶⁵ Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, p. 403.

chandise. And there the clergy officiated and preached. Their daily dress was now altogether distinct from that of the laity. In the time of St. Jerome it could be said that to become a priest was to change one's habits, not one's dress.⁶⁶ This was no longer true. The tunic and the Roman toga were well suited to the gravity of the clergy in the first centuries. Such was no longer true of the Franks' costume, which consisted of a woolen or fur jerkin, breeches of cloth or leather, and a tunic with short, tight sleeves. Over this was worn the *sagum*, a short cloak held in place by a clasp. St. Boniface forbade the clergy to wear the *sagum*, which was a military garment.⁶⁷ In the middle of the ninth century conciliar decisions were needed to compel priests and monks to keep their hair cut short instead of having it long, a mark of nobility among the Franks. Certain clerics of the Narbonne and Vienne districts had adopted the black cloak made of coarse material and the rope cincture of the Eastern monks. Pope St. Celestine found fault with them and advised rather the Roman toga, which the clerics in Frankish countries began to wear.

Finally clerical dress, in the time of Charlemagne, seems to have consisted of four principal articles: the soutane or cassock, which recalled the *vestis talaris* worn by the priest in the performance of his sacred functions, and also the dress of the Gallic young women;⁶⁸ the alb, mentioned by Alcuin in his *De officiis divinis*, which was worn outdoors as well as in the church;⁶⁹ the cloak, also called chasuble or cope (*casula*), which covered the whole body and which the councils strove

⁶⁶ St. Jerome to Nepotian. Cf. Thomassin, I, 30-128.

⁶⁷ *Interdiximus servis Dei ne pompato habitu, vel sagis, vel armis utantur. Epist.*, 101. Du Cange, the word *sagum*.

⁶⁸ Du Cange, the words *sottanum*, *soutane*, *subtaneum*. In a Frankish chronicle we read: *Ante nuptias tunica de pignolato, quae dicebatur sottanum, erant contentae. Muratori, Script. rerum italic.*, XII, 1033.

⁶⁹ Du Cange, under the word *alba*, says: *Promiscue in ecclesia et extra ecclesiam*. St. Nicholas I calls it *linea toga*. Of a more or less considerable length, it was not essentially different from the surplice.

to substitute in place of the *sagum*;⁷⁰ lastly upon the head and shoulders, a camail with pointed capuche, which, at least in its form, seems to have been taken from the dress of soldiers, who used the camail as defensive armor,⁷¹ or from the dress of the Eastern clergy.⁷²

The Sacraments

The priest's principal functions were the administration of the sacraments, the ceremonies of the liturgy, and preaching. In each of these functions important changes took place in the Carolingian period.

Up to the eighth century, baptism was administered, in the West as well as in the East, by immersion, if not complete immersion, at least partial, accompanied by pouring. The ceremony was performed either in streams or in baptisteries. But at the time of which we are speaking, priests were satisfied to use simple pouring. Immersion became more and more abandoned; there was no longer any question at all of total immersion.⁷³ Instead of the baptisteries of early days, baptismal fonts or *putei sacri* were built in the churches.

The public penance of early times also disappeared. Conservative men like Hincmar of Reims with good reason protested against the spirit of laxity that led to its abandonment. But their protests were not sustained officially by the Church, and little by little the movement which they deplored brought about the final suppression of public penance. These conserva-

⁷⁰ *Presbyteri vel diaconi*, says a Council of Leptines, *non sagis, laicorum more, sed casulis utantur, ritu servorum Dei*. Quoted by Du Cange, under the word *casula*.

⁷¹ Froissart says: "The weapon extended outside the cape, which was of good mail."

⁷² The use of the cape (*camelaucum*) had passed from the East to Rome. The *Liber pontificalis*, in the life of Constantine, says: *Apostolicus pontifex cum camelauco, ut solitus est Roma procedere. Lib. pont., I, 390.*

⁷³ Iconography does not furnish a single example of total immersion after the eighth century.

tives were more thoroughly right in their forceful complaint against the abuse that had arisen in connection with the sacrament of penance, the penitential books. The Germanic custom of the *wergeld*, or pecuniary composition, gave some people the idea of making a price list of canonical penances imposed for certain sins. Then was introduced the practice of avoiding the penance by payment of the amount of money stipulated in the price list. The hierarchical Church protested. The Council of Clovesho in 747, of Chalon-sur-Saône in 813, and of Mainz in 847 even ordered the destruction of the penitential books.⁷⁴

A like evolution took place in the administration of the Eucharist. In the ancient basilicas only solemn public masses were celebrated. Whereas in the East this usage persisted, in the West an increasing number of priests celebrated private mass at any hour of the morning, regardless of whether any people were present or not. At sight of this practice, many of the faithful were astonished, many bishops promulgated prohibitions, considering as essential the participation of the people in the sacrifice. But the custom of private masses, tolerated by the Church, spread. At the same time, despite the protests of the Easterners, the use of unleavened bread for the hosts became general; a special ceremonial became fixed for masses said for the dead; communion was still given under both species, the precious blood being taken by means of a tube; but, from the inconveniences of this practice, it could be foreseen that some day it would be abolished.

⁷⁴ Hardouin, IV, 1038. In 760, the Rule of St. Chrodegang speaks of confession made *proprio sacerdoti*, or rather *suo sacerdoti*, and later the bishop of Basel, Otto (802-822), says more clearly that the faithful *a proprio episcopo aut sacerdote ligandi aut exsolvendi sunt, non ab extraneo* (*Rev. quest. hist.*, October 1, 1905, p. 644). It is true that, along with priest confessors, deacons and the simple faithful were allowed to hear confessions which St. Thomas later calls *quodammodo sacramentales*. Cf. Mansi, XVIII, 148; *PL*, XC, 629 ff.; XCIII, 39. Cf. Paul Laurain, *De l'intervention des laïques dans l'administration de la pénitence*, pp. 15, 97 ff.

Matrimony

The canonical legislation about marriage became more precise, by a clearer affirmation of its indissolubility, but amid many obstacles on the part of the barbarian society. Most of the old Frankish, Visigothic, and Burgundian laws allowed divorce.⁷⁵ In 1613 Jerome Bignon discovered the celebrated formula of Marculf, giving, in the middle of the seventh century, a formula of divorce by mutual consent.⁷⁶ A century later local councils or rather the diets of Verberie in 753 and of Compiègne in 756 or 758, presided over by King Pepin, at which the lay element mingled with the ecclesiastical element, seem to have permitted, in case of incestuous adultery, that the innocent husband or wife might remarry during the lifetime of the other partner.⁷⁷ But, in conformity with the ancient traditions, the most authentic spokesmen of the Church continually proclaimed the absolute indissolubility of the marital bond.⁷⁸ A capitulary of Charlemagne, published in 789, forbids husband and wife, though separated from each other, to contract a new marriage.⁷⁹ Another capitulary (802), renewing a law

⁷⁵ *Lex burgund.*, 34. Baluze, IV, 205. *Lex Visigot.*, Bk. III, a. 4; Baluze, IV, 321 f.

⁷⁶ *Dum . . . discordia regnat et ab hoc pariter conversare minime possunt, placuit utriusque voluntas ut se a consortio separare deberent . . . ut unusquisque sive ad servitium Dei in monasterio aut ad copulam matrimonii se sociare voluerit licentiam habeat.* Baluze, II, 423; Zeumer, 94, 145, 248.

⁷⁷ Hardouin, *Acta conciliorum*, III, 1990 ff., 2006.

⁷⁸ The following councils: Nantes (650), canon 2; Hereford (673), canon 10; Friuli (791), canon 10; Paris (829), canon 2. Mansi, XI, 130; XIII, 849; XIV, 596; XVIII, 169 f.

⁷⁹ Baluze, I, 231. Against the indissolubility of the marriage bond, a so-called decree of Pope Zachary is sometimes cited, giving the same solution as the councils of Verberie and Compiègne. Gratian, *Decret.*, c. 23, *caus.* 32, *quaest.* 7. But the authenticity of this decree is disputed. Its origin is unknown. The first mention of it is found in the eleventh century, in Burchard, *PL*, CXL, 965. Moreover, it has not the form of a decree, but rather of an extract from a penitential. Against the doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage, appeal is also made to a reply of Gregory II to St. Boniface; according to this reply, the husband of a woman who is suffering from an ailment that prevents her from performing her marital act, is permitted to marry another. *PL*, LXXXIX, 524 f. But we have no right to argue from the solution of a

of Pepin (755), decides that all marriages must be contracted publicly, after serious inquiry as to the degree of consanguinity of the future couple.⁸⁰

The Liturgy

Charlemagne was zealous in the promotion of plain chant and the liturgy. From Rome he obtained chanters to introduce the Gregorian traditions into Germany. The first organs, a present from the court of Constantinople to Pepin the Short, were brought to France in the middle of the eighth century; Charlemagne had one made for the Aachen cathedral, and the new instrument contributed much to the liturgical splendor of the feasts. Feast days increased in number. The notable development of the cult of the saints, which has its theological justification in the dogma of the communion of saints, is also to be explained at this period by the need to combat numerous local superstitions and pagan feasts. The shrines of St. Martin of Tours, St. Denis, St. Remigius, St. James of Compostela were the goals of many pilgrimages.

The Church and the Emperor were even obliged to place a restraint upon the popular enthusiasm. New saints, canonized by the acclaim of their fellow-townsmen or fellow-countrymen, arose on all sides, their statues were to be seen everywhere along the highways, their virtues and their miracles were celebrated in fanciful and exaggerated accounts. In a capitulary of 794, Charlemagne, in accord with the bishops, forbade the "honoring of new saints or the erection of monuments to them along the roads unless they are particularly well known for

case of conscience, when we have not the statement of the case. The woman's incapacity may have been previous to the marriage and hence a cause of nullity. On this question, see Boudinhon, *Rev. du cl. fr.*, May 15, 1909, pp. 470-474.

⁸⁰ Marriage was forbidden by Gregory II only within the fourth degree. *PL*, LXXXIX, 524 f. But legislation regarding causes of nullity of marriage was still rather fluctuating. This circumstance may explain why Charlemagne's irregular unions aroused so little astonishment among contemporaries.

their sufferings or their virtues.”⁸¹ A few years later, probably because this capitulary proved ineffective, the Emperor decreed that “no new saint shall be honored without the approbation of the bishop and without regard for all the canons of the Church.”⁸²

We know how successful was the work of liturgical reform begun under the auspices of Pepin, continued by Charlemagne, and completed by Louis the Pious. Its effect extended to almost the whole Church. According to Duchesne, this is how the change took place:

The individuals who were charged by the Frankish kings—Pepin, Charlemagne, and Louis the Pious—with the execution of the liturgical reform did not regard themselves as prohibited from supplementing the Roman books or from combining with them whatever seemed worth preserving in the Gallican rite. Hence arose a somewhat composite liturgy, which from its source in the imperial chapel spread throughout all the Churches of the Frankish Empire, and at length, finding its way to Rome, gradually supplanted there the ancient use.⁸³

Only Milan seems not to have been affected by the Carolingian reform.

Preaching

Charlemagne is rightly honored for the reform in preaching brought about in the ninth century. The clérgy, for the most part recruited from the barbarians, were not yet well enough instructed to suffice by themselves for the demands of regular preaching. They had to take and learn by heart sermons already composed. By Charlemagne’s orders, Alcuin, Paul the Deacon, Florus of Lyons, and several others made up collections of

⁸¹ Baluze, I, 269.

⁸² Baluze, I, 427. Not until later, at the end of the tenth century, was the canonization of saints reserved to the pope alone. The first canonization by a pope was that of St. Ulrich bishop of Augsburg, who was declared a saint in 993 by Pope John XV.

⁸³ Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, p. 104.

homilies, in which they added to the works of the fathers a few more modern compositions. The Emperor had these collections distributed in the different dioceses of his Empire. They had the advantage of leading the preachers to the imitation of the models of ancient times.⁸⁴ Further, the people needed to be addressed in their ordinary language, which was the Romance or the Frankish tongue. Before the clergy the preaching continued to be in Latin, but the Frankish or Romance tongue was used before the laity.⁸⁵ From a pulpit raised a few steps above the floor level, no longer *in plano* as in the first centuries, the preacher delivered to the people at times an informal homily, at other times a formal sermon. A new phase had begun in the history of popular preaching.

Iconoclastic Dispute

At times the tone of these popular preachers must have risen to theological considerations. The hour had not yet arrived when Hincmar, Gottschalk, and Scotus Erigena would stir up the most difficult problems about the real presence and predestination. But, already in Charlemagne's reign, three theological questions were being considered; the question of the worship of images, that of adoptionism, and that of the procession of the Holy Ghost (the *Filioque* question).

We have seen how the attacks of Leo the Isaurian against the pope during the iconoclast dispute directly brought about the rupture between the papacy and Constantinople, and the alliance of the papacy with the Franks. The persecution, interrupted for a while, revived in the East under Constantine (V) Copronymus. In 754 a pseudo-council of 338 iconoclast bishops, nearly all of them from the patriarchate of Constantinople,

⁸⁴ Lecoy de la Marche, *La chaire française au Moyen Age*, p. 9.

⁸⁵ Adalhard abbot of Corbie preached in Latin, in German, and in the vulgar tongue. *Acta sanctorum*, January 2, I, 416. Cf. *Hist. littéraire*, IV, 8, 337; introduction, pp. x f.

again forbade any image, and promulgated against whoever "should make, venerate, expose, or reveal the least icon," the penalty of deposition for the clergy and excommunication for the laity, without prejudice thereby to pursuit by the secular arm.⁸⁶ The latter soon proceeded with rigor. With savage brutality, Copronymus, not satisfied with burning the images and casting the relics into the sea, sacked the churches, destroying some from roof to floor, turning others into barracks and stables, declaring war without quarter upon those whom he called "the abominable," that is, upon the monks. Many of these paid with their life for their fidelity to the Catholic tradition.

But, outside the Empire, the three patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem protested against these acts of violence and from their pulpits anathematized the heresy of the Byzantines.⁸⁷ Pope Stephen III in a Roman synod condemned the doctrines of the iconoclast pseudo-council.⁸⁸ Finally in 787, at the request of the imperial regent Irene and of the patriarch St. Tarasius, Pope Adrian I approved the meeting of a general council. Bishops to the number of 350, all from the Byzantine Empire, assembled at Nicaea under the presidency of the papal legates, and once again condemned the iconoclast heresy. Yet they clearly distinguished between the veneration of images (*προσκύνησις*), which they declared lawful, and the adoration (*λατρεία*), which they absolutely forbade.⁸⁹

The distinction was not superfluous. More than one Easterner may have fallen into blameworthy excesses in the cult he rendered to the venerated icons. In consequence of a remarkably expressive liturgy that made use of numerous pros-

⁸⁶ Mansi, XIII, 327-356.

⁸⁷ Mansi, XII, 680.

⁸⁸ Mansi, XII, 720, 722, 900; *Lib. pont.*, I, 476 f.

⁸⁹ See the acts in Mansi, Vols. XII and XIII. They are summarized in Hefele, *History of the Councils*, V, 365.

trations before the objects of worship, and by virtue of a metaphysical tendency that led them to see a mysterious power in the holy images, some Easterners may have given the impression of an adoration strictly so called in which a simple veneration was proper, and thus occasioned the appellation "adorers of images." Hence the violent reaction of the image smashers, whom contact with the Mussulmans, enemies of any representation of the Divinity, was able to stir up, or whom a desire to make Christianity more acceptable to their infidel neighbors may have encouraged.

But those were special conditions, formed by the Eastern customs. How did the iconoclast dispute, after the clear decision of the Second Council of Nicaea, arise again in the West, and there lead to the holding of various councils, the intervention of Charlemagne, and the scandal of violent strife?

It was the result of regrettable misunderstandings, in which the perfidy of the Eastern heretics played a part. Very different from the mentality of the faithful of the East was the attitude of Westerners with regard to the veneration of images. Instead of showering upon the images those outward marks of veneration which had furnished a pretext for the scandal of the iconoclasts, or of attributing a mystical power to the representations of the saints, the Westerners seemed to value them from the point of view of their artistic merit and honored them because of the religious memory which they recalled.

Great, therefore, was their surprise when, upon receiving the acts of the Council of Nicaea, they read therein that, with regard to the holy images, the cult prescribed by the council was that of adoration. In fact, it was by the Latin word *adoratio* that the Greek translators of the acts of the council had translated the word *προσκύνησις*, "veneration." In this translation Bishop Constantine of Cyprus used the following sentence: "Just as I adore the Trinity, I adore the images,"

whereas the Greek text said: "I adore the Trinity, and I love the images."⁹⁰ Charlemagne and the Frankish bishops were then stirred. A great council of 300 bishops, held at Frankfort in 794, declared clearly that they took a stand between the council of the iconoclasts, which ordered the destruction of the images, and the Council of Nicaea, which "commands them to be adored the same as the Trinity." There followed the famous Caroline Books, memoirs drawn up by Charlemagne or by his command, in which we find proclaimed in a spirited style that, "rendering to God alone the worship of adoration, and unwilling to adore the images with one council and equally unwilling to prohibit them with the others, we reject the writing of the inept synod, *ineptissimae synodi*."⁹¹ Pope Adrian, no doubt seeing that the divergence in no way bore upon a question of doctrine, but rested solely upon a misunderstanding, was wise enough to specify nothing in his reply and to leave to time the care of clarifying the matter. A fresh outburst of the iconoclast dispute in the East a few years later reawakened the sensibilities of the Franks and delayed the settlement of the quarrel.

In the reign of Leo the Armenian (813-820) another heretical pseudo-council brought on a new era of persecutions, exile, and tortures, that were continued under Michael (II) Balbus (820-829) and under Theophilus (829-842). The loyal Catholics were unable to breathe freely until the reign of the regent Theodora. Following the example of the regent

⁹⁰ Mansi, XII, 1148; Hardouin, IV, 151; Hefele, *Histoire des conciles*, French trans., V, 129. M. D. Serruys, master of conferences at the École des Hautes Études, has recently discovered, in an unpublished work of Nicephorus patriarch of Constantinople, the original Greek text of certain evidence transmitted to Charlemagne by the Byzantine emperors. It is now evident that the texts of iconoclast origin had been chosen for the purpose of leading Charlemagne into error. Serruys, *Comptes rendus de l'Acad. des Inscript. et Belles-Lettres*, 1904.

⁹¹ *PL*, XCVIII, 995 ff. On the authenticity of the Carolinian books, see Hefele, V, 118-143, and Kraus, *Kirchengeschichte*, sec. 73, no. 3. The Frankish bishops and Charlemagne did not consider the Second Council of Nicaea as ecumenical. Pope Adrian, in his reply, declares that this council has not yet been given approval.

Irene, she restored the cult of images in 842. Methodius, the new patriarch of Constantinople, elected in 843, accomplished the work of restoration, which took place amid popular acclamations; "nothing was left of iconoclasm in the East except an increase of love for the images and even an exaggeration of their veneration."⁹²

St. John Damascene and St. Theodore of Studium

Two great saints became illustrious during this dispute, St. John Damascene and St. Theodore of Studium. The former, whom the Council of Nicaea proclaimed one of the champions of the cult of images,⁹³ was poet, mystic, orator, theologian, and polemic. Posterity has especially admired and studied his two books, *The Fountain of Wisdom* and *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*. In these he sums up in a comprehensive picture the whole theological tradition of the Eastern fathers; a masterpiece that has been compared to the *Summa* of St. Thomas Aquinas. Theodore of Studium, a poet at times and a polemic when the defense of the Church called for it, was first of all a mystic, a renowned director of souls. Of his letters more than five hundred are extant; they are an inexhaustible mine of information for a knowledge of men and things of his time. In the persecution of Michael Balbus, he it was who, to put an end to the dispute, asked that, "in keeping with immemorial tradition, they should conform to the declaration of the Roman Church, *suprema ecclesiarum Dei*."⁹⁴

The Emperor tried to win Louis the Pious to his cause and wrote to him for this purpose. Some Frankish bishops, assembled in Paris in 825, replied that in their opinion the images in the churches, "for educated people were only an ornament and a pious reminder, for the uneducated a means of instruction";

⁹² Pargoire, *L'Église byzantine*, p. 271.

⁹³ Mansi, XIII, 357.

⁹⁴ Theodore of Studium, Bk. II, *epist.* 86; *PG*, XCIX, 1331.

but they protested also that they wished to be free to honor them or not, to possess them or not, *in colendo vel non colendo, in habendo vel non habendo*. This view was in keeping with the decisions of the Council of Frankfort. At the same period, Claude bishop of Turin, who had been won over to the iconoclast heresy, even ordered the images to be smashed and the crosses to be broken up. But, condemned by the Pope, he was not followed.

Finally, however, agreement was reached. At the close of the ninth century, after prolonged controversies, in which Agobard of Lyons,⁹⁵ Jonas of Orleans,⁹⁶ Hincmar of Reims,⁹⁷ and Walafrid Strabo⁹⁸ participated, the misunderstandings and prejudices that had led the Frankish bishops astray, were dissipated, and the Second Council of Nicaea was everywhere accepted without reserve.

Adoptionism

Closely allied with this question of the veneration of images was the question of adoptionism. Claude of Turin, the iconoclast, was also an adoptionist, and the Council of Frankfort in 794 had to declare its attitude on both questions.

The new heresy arose in Spain. About 782, a certain Migetius, reviving the error of Sabellius about the Trinity, taught that the Divinity had been successively revealed to men, as the Father by David, as the Son by Christ, and as the Holy Ghost by St. Paul. Further, Christ was confused with the Word, who was born at a given moment in time, namely, on the very day of the incarnation.⁹⁹

Two Spanish bishops, Elipandus of Toledo and Felix of

⁹⁵ *Contra Tempestarios*; PL, CIV.

⁹⁶ *De cultu imaginum*, PL, CVI.

⁹⁷ His work is not extant.

⁹⁸ *De exordiis et incrementis rerum ecclesiasticarum*.

⁹⁹ Letter from Elipandus to Migetius, PL, XCVI, 859.

Urgel, undertook to refute this Trinitarian heresy by making a distinction between the eternal sonship of the Word and the temporal sonship of Christ. But they failed to provide against an equally harmful Christological error.

Elipandus of Toledo

Elipandus, who seems to have been especially a dialectician, but one with a narrow and rigid logic, made this distinction between the two sonships: that the first should be called natural since the Word, consubstantial with His Father, possesses the same nature, whereas the second can be called only adoptive since Christ is man and since God could merely elevate to Himself, could merely assume, merely adopt the humanity. Lastly, he maintained that there were two Sons of God, one by nature, and the other by adoption. He forgot that in the incarnate Word there can be only one center of attribution, as the Schoolmen express it, only one person, and that this person is that of the Word.

Felix of Urgel

What Elipandus claimed to prove by logic, Felix of Urgel defended as a critic. The attention to the correction of manuscripts began to develop in Spain, as in France, a taste for textual criticism. Felix of Urgel first noted that the qualifying term *advocatus* is several times attributed to Christ. But, he said, this word is synonymous with *assumptus*, *adoptatus* and from this consideration he attempted to derive proofs by the study of the texts.¹⁰⁰ He also appealed to Scriptural passages which he advanced as decisive against the theory of natural sonship as applied to Christ. It is not admissible, he maintained, that he who is the Son of God by nature should have had the instances of "not knowing," which we find in the life of Christ.

¹⁰⁰ *PL*, CI, 194, 1333.

Because Christ, as such, did not know the day of judgment, He did not know what the disciples of Emmaus were discussing, or where the body of Lazarus had been laid, or whether He was beloved by Peter more than by the rest, and other such instances.¹⁰¹ Felix' criticism was as narrow as the dialectic of Elipandus. For the point at issue was to know whether this ignorance of Christ as man—the very existence, nature, and cause of this ignorance needed to be determined—cannot be reconciled with the unity of a divine person, the center of attribution of all the qualities and actions of Jesus Christ.

The Spanish error, as it has been called, aroused the protest of Alcuin, who wrote seven books against Felix of Urgel, and the protest of Agobard archbishop of Lyons, who wrote a learned treatise on the question.

Condemnation of Adoptionism

It is more interesting to note the position taken, from the very outset, by Alcuin's good sense and Catholic instinct. Upon the first report of the heresy, he wrote to Charlemagne: "What? Christ, the son of the Virgin, is not God's own Son? What a rash assertion!"¹⁰² In the step by step discussion with his opponent, never did he lose sight of the general economy of religion; all the conclusions of his arguments he brought back to that consideration. One long controversy with Felix he terminates in these words: "This is what I want you to state with definite finality; yes or no, do you agree to adore as God Him who was crucified, who died, and who rose from the dead?"¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ *PL*, CIV, 37.

¹⁰² *PL*, C, 168 ff.

¹⁰³ Alcuin's Catholic sense thus avoided the danger so justly pointed out by a critic of our time. "We may say that all the heresies were born from deductions pursued in a single direction, starting out from a principle of tradition or science, isolated from all context, erected into an absolute truth, and carrying in its train, by a process of reasoning, conclusions that were incompatible with the general harmony of religion and of the traditional teaching." Alfred Loisy, *L'Évangile et*

At the Council of Frankfort (794), the adoption heresy was the subject of exhaustive examination, after which the bishops of Italy drew up an exposition of the proofs furnished by the Bible against the theories of Elipandus and Felix.¹⁰⁴ The bishops of Germany, of Gaul, and of Aquitaine, in a synodal letter, discussed the Patristic texts appealed to by the innovators and clearly established the Catholic thesis.¹⁰⁵ The council, in its first canon, pronounced the adoption theory heretical, and Charlemagne sent a letter to Elipandus and the other bishops of Spain in which, after offering them a fine profession of faith, he urged them to abandon their personal opinions and take their stand with the doctrines of the universal Church.¹⁰⁶

The *Filioque*

The question of the *Filioque* did not have any direct connection with the questions of iconoclasm and adoptionism. But it revealed the same spirit of opposition. A number of men of the period professed all three errors relative to these questions.

It was at the Council of Toledo (589), at the very time when Spain publicly abjured Arianism, like a song of victory over the vanquished heresy and like an affirmation of the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son, there appeared the addition to the Creed of the word *Filioque*.¹⁰⁷ This liturgical addition, corresponding to a traditional dogmatic doctrine, had

l'Église, 1st ed., p. 143. The author of these lines became separated from the Catholic Church because he forgot that principle.

¹⁰⁴ *PL*, CI, 1131; Mansi, 873.

¹⁰⁵ Mansi, XIII, 883.

¹⁰⁶ *PL*, XCVIII, 899; Mansi, XIII, 899 ff. Adoptionism sprang up again in the twelfth century with Abelard, in the fourteenth with Durandus of Saint-Pourçain and Gabriel Biel, in the eighteenth century with Ysambert.

¹⁰⁷ "I believe in the Holy Ghost who proceeds from the Father *and from the Son*." The word *Filioque* is to be found in another council of Toledo (447).

passed from Spain into France. Perhaps this did not take place without stirring up some protests, for Einhard mentions that, in a council held in 767 at Gentilly, there was question of the Holy Trinity as well as of the veneration of images.¹⁰⁸

The dispute flared up in consequence of a regrettable incident. In a Palestinian monastery on the Mount of Olives, some Western monks, following the custom of Charlemagne's chapel, chanted the *Filioque* in the Creed. They were attacked by some Greek monks, who tried to expel them as heretics. They were charged with being doubly culpable for introducing into the Nicene symbol a new formula contrary to a decision of the Council of Ephesus and for thereby intimating a grave heresy, namely, the existence in the Trinity of a twofold principle, of a double *spiratio*. The charge was groundless, because the prohibition decreed by the Council of Ephesus had never been regarded by the Church as a perpetual one,¹⁰⁹ and the oneness of principle and of *spiratio* was quite reconcilable with the denounced formula.¹¹⁰

But the mistake was not without some excuse. The Greek fathers, notably the three great Cappadocian doctors (St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and St. Gregory of Nyssa) had not considered the divine life from the same point of view as the Latin fathers did. The former considered especially the distinction and the hierarchy of the three divine hypostases, which they then endeavored to reconcile in the unity and the consubstantiality. The Latins, on the contrary, set out from the point of view of the divine unity and consubstantiality. Hence arose the diverse manners of expressing their faith. The Easterners, accustomed to consider the hierarchy of the

¹⁰⁸ Hefele, *History of the Councils*, V, 330.

¹⁰⁹ For proof of this fact, see Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome*, pp. 50 ff.

¹¹⁰ At the Council of Florence several of the Greeks were surprised to learn that the Latins admitted only one principle and only one "spiration," and that the Father and the Son communicate being to the Holy Ghost by what they have in common, and not by that by which they differ.

persons, preferred the formula that made the Holy Ghost proceed *from the Father by the Son*, and the Westerners, accustomed to consider in the persons what was common to them, spoke of the Holy Ghost as proceeding *from the Father and from the Son*. Thus we can see how the misunderstanding arose. The first mistake of the Easterners was to adopt violent measures; their second mistake later on—and unfortunately it is still that of our separated brethren of the East—was to refuse their submission to the authority of the supreme pontiff and to the evidence of long established tradition.¹¹¹

The attitude of Pope Leo III, before whom the case was at once taken by the Latin monks, was most conciliatory. That of Charlemagne, to whom the monks also turned since he was their suzerain,¹¹² was as firm as it was prudent. The Emperor commissioned Theodulph bishop of Orleans to collect the principal patristic texts in favor of the Latin usage, for the purpose of enabling his Palestinian protégés to defend themselves against the charge of heresy. At Aachen he assembled a great synod (809), which approved the writing of Theodulph. Two deputies were commissioned to bear the acts of this council to Rome. In January, 810, Pope Leo III gave his decision. He clearly distinguished the dogmatic question from the liturgical question, so unfortunately confused by the Easterners. From the dogmatic viewpoint, he fully approved the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Ghost through the Father and the Son. He said: "Whoever does not believe according to this faith is condemned by the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church." The encyclical containing these words was addressed by the Pope to all the Eastern Churches, to instruct them, "as also the

¹¹¹ We know that this question of the *Filioque* was Photius' chief pretext for declaring the schism, and that it is still the first of the grievances uttered against the Roman Church by the Eastern schismatic Church. See the encyclical published September 29 (October 11), 1895, by Patriarch Anthimus of Constantinople and by his synod.

¹¹² Hefele, *Histoire des conciles*, V, 173-176.

whole world, in the true Catholic faith." It has all the extrinsic and intrinsic marks of an act given *ex cathedra*. In the matter of the liturgical dispute, the Pope, probably supposing that it would be imprudent to embitter it by an immediate decision, judged it well to temporize. To Charlemagne's ambassadors he declared that, if his advice were asked, he would counsel that the *Filioque* be not introduced. He added that now the best would be not to sing the Creed any more in the imperial palace, since it was not sung at Rome. Then, to give the Christian world a visible evidence of the community of faith between the East and the West, he had engraved on two tablets of silver, without the word *Filioque*, the identical texts of the Nicene Creed in Greek and in Latin. These tablets were placed in the Basilica of St. Peter.¹¹³

The Pope had not explicitly forbidden the Frankish Churches to add the word *Filioque*. This addition gradually spread by a sort of popular impulse which Charlemagne did not oppose. In 1014 Emperor St. Henry, by his insistent request and as a protest against the obstinate denial of the Greeks, brought it about that the *Filioque* was sung at Rome even in solemn mass. We find it admitted by the Greeks and by the Latins at the ecumenical councils of Lyons and Florence.

In this matter Charlemagne's attitude seems not to have exceeded the proper measure that became a respectful son of the Church, in the mission that he set before himself, to defend the Church against her external enemies and to protect her within in her hierarchy, in her worship, and in her dogma. Greater than Constantine, Charlemagne in his public life can be considered the type of Christian emperor. Popular admiration went further; it canonized him; and the decree of an antipope confirmed that canonization.¹¹⁴ But the Church has never

¹¹³ *Liber pontif.* I, 46 note; Hefele, V, 177 f.

¹¹⁴ The antipope Guido who took the name of Paschal III. Ever since, the Church has tolerated the cult of Charlemagne at Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) and in a certain number of dioceses. But Pius IX forbade its extension. See a letter from Pius IX

proposed his veneration to the faithful, and impartial history must be satisfied to consider Charlemagne as one of the greatest benefactors of the Church and of civilization.

to Cardinal de Geissel archbishop of Cologne, in 1850 (Ketterer, *Karl der Grosse und die Kirche*, p. 256). Benedict XIV, in his treatise *De servorum Dei beatif.*, I, 9, 4, thinks this tolerance assures to Charlemagne the title of Blessed. In any event, it does not involve the infallibility of the Church. The gravest blame laid upon Charlemagne is that which concerns his private morals. He had nine wives (Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, chap. 18; *PL*, XCVIII, 257). Even if we consider that those whom Einhard calls Charlemagne's concubines were morganatic wives, it would be difficult to explain so many widowhoods. It is more natural to suppose repudiations, which could have been in some degree of good faith, because the principles about marriage impediments were not well established at that period among the barbarians. In fact, no contemporary blamed Charlemagne's morals. The first to attack them was Walafriid Strabo, in the middle of the ninth century. See, in the *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne*, the two articles by Dom Cabrol: "The cult of Charlemagne," and "Charlemagne and the liturgy."

CHAPTER XIV

The Beginning of Feudalism

“WHEN men’s existence extends hardly beyond the place where they live and die, when the absence of commerce, of industry, of intellectual activity, and the non-existence or rareness of material and intellectual communications straiten their thought within a compass as limited as the scope of their actual sight, how can a great society subsist? What ideas, what relations, what interests would form its bond and nourishment? The only society then possible is a narrow society, local as the mind and the life of its members. And if by some mighty accident, by some passing cause, a vaster society is formed for a moment, it soon dissolves, and in its place is born a multitude of little societies, formed according to the degree of the men’s development, that soon produce, each in its limits, a government of the same dimension. . . . Charlemagne permanently halted the invasion of the barbarians, and new disorders no longer came incessantly to add to the immense disorder that already reigned between the Rhine and the Ocean. Society was able to begin in France. But it began only by drawing in its lines more closely.”¹

Partition of the Royal Patrimony

The Carolingian Empire was, in fact, neither the transfer of the Eastern Empire, from which nothing that it possessed had been taken away, nor the restoration of the Roman Empire, which had been founded upon principles quite differ-

¹ Guizot, *Essais sur l’histoire de France*, third essay, 9th ed., p. 69.

ent from those of the Carolingian Empire. And it had not become the real empire of the Middle Ages, the keystone of the whole feudal hierarchy. Charlemagne's Empire fulfilled what was essential in its providential mission. Against its continuance were the traditions and customs of the Germanic races, the present necessities, and, to a certain extent, the Church herself.

In the Frankish traditions, royalty was less a supreme power than a sort of patrimony, which must be divided among the children of the one it belonged to. As Clovis had divided his kingdom between his sons, it was natural that Charlemagne should in turn divide his: this was the first cause of weakness. Further, a Frankish king, following the national customs, must be surrounded by numerous companions living at his court, whom he attached to himself by presents and benefices and who, through the very effect of those benefices, became a menace to him: this was the second danger. Lastly, unlike the emperors of Rome and of the East, the Frankish kings had no revenues from regular taxes. To irregular contributions coming to them from free gifts and from tributes levied upon conquered peoples, they added taxes conceived on the basis of the Roman law; but they encountered resistance, as evidenced by the royal edicts, and were obliged to abandon them.² The Franks had no permanent army or paid soldiers. Upon the king's summons, the free men had to gather under the standards, the wealthy equipping themselves at their own expense, the poor grouping themselves about a big landowner, who provided the equipment. It was with these big landowners that the king was obliged to reckon.

Growing Power of the Nobles

In addition to the weakening influence of the political traditions, there were the elements of dissolution existing in the

² Clotaire ed., in 614; *MGH, Leges*, I, 15.

very depth of the character of the Germanic races. The Roman was ever ready to sacrifice his person to the sovereign state; quite to the contrary, the German was accustomed to put his personal independence in the first place. Hence in the collection of taxes and in the call to arms, there arose difficulties, revolts, and perpetual threats of anarchy. The situation was aggravated by the afflictions of the time.

Above the slaves, the petty farmers, the tenants, the laborers, were the *poor* who were simply small landowners, having allodial tenure, that is, freeholders. These were the ones who suffered most. They were without the security of the serf, who was under the protection of his powerful master. They were daily threatened in their freedom and in their property. The public authority should have defended them; but, on the contrary, the depositaries of authority were the ones who oppressed them. . . . Suppose the Normans made an incursion. . . . The royal power, without a permanent army, without fortresses of its own, without any of those things that protect a great social body, was unable to defend the population. It was no longer obeyed. Then all eyes and hopes turned to the lords. They were sure to be found in the hour of danger; they did not have to come from afar; they lived in the threatened province or canton. Between the count and the population of the county a bond of interest was visible. The lord was well armed; he had a watchful eye over all. Strong or feeble, he was the sole defender and the sole hope of the men. That was the epoch when the fortified castles were built. Six centuries later, men were seized by an immense hatred against those seignoral fortresses, but at the time they were built men looked upon them with fondness and gratitude. Each castle was the safety of a canton.³

Such was the birth of feudalism. The Church, with all its power, favored the movement: she saw in it the safety of those whom she most particularly loved, the poor, the weak, the oppressed. She herself entered into it at the start, and to a very considerable extent. To her the poor by preference commended

³ Fustel de Coulanges, "Les origines du régime féodal" in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, August 1, 1874, pp. 575-578.

themselves.⁴ "It was good to live beneath the cross." To bishops and abbots the kings granted the most immunities. At first the greatest lords were the Church prelates. It has been rightly said that the Church "contributed to the making of feudalism, rather than became subjected to a feudalism already formed."

Yet the origin of the feudal movement did not always have this beneficent character. St. Gregory of Tours speaks of a certain Cautinus "who laid hands on any lands adjoining his own,"⁵ and of one Pelagius "who continually committed thefts, covert and open attacks, violent assaults, and divers other crimes."⁶ Charlemagne, in several capitularies, forbade the powerful (*potentiores*) "to oppress the free men who are poor, in contempt of all justice, in such manner as to force them to sell or cede their lands."⁷ Besides the lord protector, there was the lord despoiler; and often the *recommenda*tion made to a single great personage was the means of escaping from the oppression of the others.⁸

The formation of all these little autonomous groups, a consequence of the powerlessness of the Empire, in turn became a cause of disintegration. Once the Empire was broken up, ambitions, greed, and the rivalries of those little states encouraged anarchy. The Church then tried to save the threatened social order. By the unity of beliefs that she preached, by the strongly disciplined hierarchy that she maintained among her

⁴ We have some formulas of *commendation*. Ordinarily they were framed in this form: "The village will pay to the viscount five solidi by way of *commendation* and, in consideration of this sum, the viscount agrees to save always and in all places the men of the village." Another form: "I receive you," said the warrior, "in my saving and defense, you and your possessions." And the farmer declared "that he made acknowledgment that he was under the protection and guardianship of the lord." In such and such a village, the lord stipulates that he be given "for each house having a plow a setier [34 gallons] of oats." Fustel de Coulanges, *Rev. des Deux-Mondes*, August 1, 1874, pp. 578 f.

⁵ St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, Bk. IV, chap. 12.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, Bk. VIII, chap. 40.

⁷ Capitulary of 805, art. 16; Baluze, I, 427.

⁸ Caesar says that among the Gauls "each man gives himself to one of the powerful so as not to be at the mercy of all the powerful."

members, she offset the dissolving influences of this spontaneous movement; by her preaching, by the ideas of justice and equity that she spread in souls, she strove to bend and discipline the scattered forces of that seething and suffering feudalism. In the free play of those forces of anarchy with the moral ideas of Christianity, the new society had to be worked out, the mighty structure of the medieval régime had to be formed. But the most beneficent social transformations rarely take place without painful convulsions.

In the trials we shall presently relate, the papacy itself was the victim of those crises. But the trials would be hard to comprehend without a brief sketch of the political events of that period.

Louis the Pious

According to the Germanic custom, Charlemagne, before his death (814), partitioned his states among his sons (Louis, Pepin, and Charles). Pepin and Charles having died, he made a second partition between Pepin's son Bernard, to whom Italy was allotted, and Louis, who had the rest with the right of succession to the Empire. Said Charlemagne's will: "If disputes arise, they will be settled by the trial of the cross,⁹ and not by war. Let no one slay my grandsons or mutilate them or tonsure them against their will." The great Emperor's peaceful spirit was manifested in the very last expressions of his wishes.

The foreseen disorders soon broke out. Louis the Pious (or the Debonnaire), in taking possession of his father's throne, found himself confronted by a turbulent nobility that was jealous and divided. Louis was pious, sober, modest, generous, and irreproachable in his morals. But a weak and fickle soul

⁹ *Hist. des Gaules*, V, 773 f. Charlemagne had always maintained judicial trials by the *judgment of God*. The ordeal of the cross consisted in holding the arms extended for the longest possible time during divine worship.

was hidden beneath an outward appearance of firmness. He was not of a stature to sustain the work of Charlemagne, at the moment when that work was menaced on all sides.

A well intentioned but clumsy reform of the imperial palace provoked the displeasure of the nobility.¹⁰ They were further exasperated when those who had been Charlemagne's chief councilors, among them Wala and Adalard, were dishonored and banished.¹¹ The revolt of Bernard king of Italy and his tragic death brought the disorder to its climax. The principal effect of the Emperor's public penance at the Council of Attigny was to discredit the imperial authority. His marriage to Judith of Bavaria, the plots of the new Empress, in whose favor Louis violated the constitution of 817 that he might endow his son Charles, brought about three successive rebellions of his other sons. Louis the Pious died June 20, 840, during a campaign against his son Louis the German, saying: "I forgive my son Louis, but let him know that he is the cause of my death."

Treaty of Verdun

There followed a relentless strife among the three brothers. Lothaire king of Italy, associated in the imperial rule by the act of 817, not satisfied with the title of emperor that came to him after his father's death, resolved to seize the states of Louis the German and of Charles the Bald. The latter, in league against their brother, waged against him (June 25, 841) the sanguinary battle of Fontenay, near Auxerre. This was the first time that Franks fought against Franks in a large war. Lothaire was beaten. Two years later at Verdun was signed the treaty that definitely dismembered Charlemagne's Empire. Charles the Bald obtained the western part, that later became France; Louis had the eastern part, that be-

¹⁰ *Hist. des Gaules*, VI, 137 f.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, VI, 79.

came Germany; Lothaire had Italy and in addition a strip of land between the possessions of his two brothers. This was named after him Lotharingia (Lorraine).

This arrangement, in some respects a happy one, since it allowed three different races to develop henceforth in keeping with laws more fitted to their genius and within limits that seemed defined by the physical geography of the country, ended a state of things on which contemporaries had built great hopes. We are therefore not surprised to read in the chronicles of the time by writers who still cherished the old imperial idea, outbursts of despair like those provoked by the fall of the Roman Empire. The deacon Florus exclaims: "Weep, France, for the Empire has lost both its name and its glory. . . . Instead of a king, we have only a kinglet; instead of a kingdom, we now have only some fragments of a kingdom. . . . Weep, you mountains and hills; weep, you fountains and rocks. No longer does that empire exist whose mission it was to unite by the faith races stranger to one another." ¹²

Spread of Feudalism

Upon the ruins of the Empire, feudalism continued to grow. From all that the central power lost, that of the lords increased. Vassalage was imposed on all free men. No one was sure of being protected unless he was "the man" of some lord. No one was certain of being obeyed unless he was the lord of some domain. Hence the counts, formerly simple public officers, needed to become endowed with an estate. But that domain became something handed on to their heirs, and the exercise of the public office followed it. Charlemagne appointed and re-

¹² Florus, *Carmen de divisione imperii*; Mabillon, *Analecta*, I, 388; *Hist. des Gaules*, VII, 301-304.

moved his counts; his successors could no longer do so. The capitulary of Quierzy (or Kiersy) in 877, although it did indeed institute the heredity of offices and of benefices, purposed in reality to confirm a state of affairs already in existence. Henceforth public law did not really exist any more. It became confounded with private law: whoever was a landowner, was sovereign.¹³

From this new condition no one suffered more and no one benefited more than the men of the Church, bishops and abbots. Land ownership, giving them the jurisdiction and the social authority which they needed, placed them in the categories of suzerains and vassals. This situation gave rise to scheming, rivalry, and jealousy. From it no one suffered more than the pope. Nowhere was the nobility so turbulent as in Italy, so audacious, so adept in conspiracy and intrigue, so ready for anarchy on account of the old rancors. Some day, under favor of these internal disorders, let an unbridled schemer, a shameless woman, seize the power and force upon Rome the yoke of a despotic suzerainty, and then, aiming at the conquest of the highest of sovereignties, they will succeed in placing simony and corruption in the see of St. Peter. For the Church this will be the supreme trial and humiliation. Not even under Nero or Julian the Apostate, not even when confronted by Attila, was the Church in so great danger. But out of this trial the Church emerged with her doctrine spotless, still fertile in saints and heroes, ready with new ardor to take up again her work of civilization and sanctification in the world. The unworthy John XII is followed by Gregory VII and Innocent III. Have we not, in this spectacle, a living and miraculous proof of the divine vitality of the Church?

¹³ Guizot, *Histoire de la civilisation en France*, lesson 3. Bourgeois, in his *Le capitulaire de Kiersy-sur-Oise*, lessens the significance which, since Montesquieu, has been given to this capitulary. Apparently it introduced nothing new, but rather recognized a state of affairs going back to Charlemagne.

Death of St. Leo III

St. Leo III survived Charlemagne only two years. But in that short space of time he had the grief of observing the powerlessness of the new Emperor, the turbulence of the Roman nobles, the might of the dukes in Italy. In 815 some people of the nobles' party formed a plot to remove the Pope by assassination.¹⁴ Leo III discovered the conspiracy, arrested the plotters and, without consulting the Emperor, had them condemned to death for the crime of lese majesty, according to Roman Law. The Pope was exercising a right that seemed to flow from his sovereignty. Louis the Pious, doubly humiliated that at the very outset of his reign such a revolt had broken out in a state of his protectorate and that the Pope had suppressed it without recourse to him and by applying the Roman law, was greatly displeased. An embassy, having at its head the Emperor's nephew Bernard king of Italy, came to present his complaint to the Pope. Leo III appealed to the urgency of the situation, which called for prompt action, and to the authority of Charlemagne, who had never imposed on the Roman state the practice of German law. At that very time terrible rebellions were taking place in the agricultural colonies of the Papal States. To put down the nobles' conspiracy, the Pope had appealed to his royal rural militia. Groups of malcontents, probably hired by the plotters, traversed the papal farms, stirring up the people to reprisals against the militia, spreading fire and pillage in all directions, arousing the peasants against the papal officers, exploiting some chance abuses to represent the officers of the Holy See as tyrants. There was word of a march upon Rome by the insurgents. The intervention of Winigis duke of Spoleto, sent by King Bernard, halted the rebels. Scarcely was the outburst quieted, when the great and

¹⁴ Einhard, *Annales*, year 815; *Hist. des Gaules*, VI, 175; the Astronomer, in the *Chron. de Saint-Denys*; *Hist. des Gaules*, VI, 139.

holy Pontiff, undoubtedly foreseeing many new trials for those States of St. Peter which he had so strongly governed, rendered his soul to God, June 12, 816.

Pope Stephen IV (816–817)

The clergy of Rome, considering the dangers which a too rigid policy might invite upon the Papal States, chose as pope a man of peaceful disposition. It was the deacon Stephen, universally esteemed for his piety, the purity of his life, and the conciliatory spirit of his character. He belonged to a noble family and had passed his youth in the patriarchal palace of the Lateran under popes Adrian and Leo.¹⁵ As soon as he was elected, Stephen IV made the whole Roman people take an oath of allegiance to the emperor.¹⁶ No precedent required this step.¹⁷ But there is no ground for supposing that the Pope meant thereby to abdicate his sovereignty. On the contrary, there is every reason to think that it was an oath taken to the emperor as protector, not as sovereign, as Pope Sergius II later explained under similar circumstances. The immediate result of this policy was a sudden lessening of the tension in the relations between the Pope and the Emperor. After his consecration, Stephen sent word of his election to Louis the Pious. The two sovereigns met at Reims and, in a thoroughly cordial interview, settled several questions of ecclesiastical policy.¹⁸ On this same occasion the Pope crowned both the Emperor and Queen Ermengarde.

Pope St. Paschal I (817–824)

Stephen IV reigned only a few months. Elected June 22, 816, he died January 25, 817. On the very day of his death his

¹⁵ *Lib. pont.*, II, 49.

¹⁶ Thégan, *Vita Ludovici*, chap. 16.

¹⁷ Lapôtre, *L'Europe et le Saint-Siège*, p. 213 note.

¹⁸ *Lib. pont.*, II, 49; *Hist. des Gaules*, VI, 140.

successor was chosen, the priest Paschal, the first of his name. He was a Roman by birth, like his predecessor raised in the Lateran Palace. But he did not belong to the nobility. His application to prayer and mortification led St. Leo III to entrust to him the government of the Abbey of St. Stephen, which was located near St. Peter's. Paschal ruled the Church for more than seven years. The quieting down of the turbulence, accomplished by the conciliatory attitude of his predecessor, enabled Paschal to start a firm policy. He did not require the people of Rome to renew the oath of allegiance to the emperor, and merely sent Louis the Pious word of his election by a special embassy. The most important result of his diplomacy was that he obtained from the Emperor a written Constitution, called the Constitution of 817, which confirmed and guaranteed the sovereignty of the pope over Rome, the exarchate, the Pentapolis, and all the districts he had previously been granted possession of. It was further agreed that the emperor was not to interfere in papal elections, which would take place according to the regulations of canon law. The emperor's intervention in the temporal government of Rome would be limited to cases of disturbance or of oppression by the powerful, the *potentiores*.¹⁹ Was it intended to include the pope in this last word? Was the expression purposely left vague so as to permit later negotiations or custom to settle irreconcilable divergencies between emperor and pope? ²⁰

The unfortunate events following upon the promulgation of this important constitution did not allow Paschal's firm and capable diplomacy to produce all the fruit that might be expected. From 817 to 824, the date of the holy Pontiff's death,

¹⁹ Baluze, I, 791 ff.

²⁰ This act of 817 is the first written constitution that we have on the respective rights of the priesthood and the empire. Formerly its authenticity was questioned. Fleury (*Hist. ecclésiastique*, VII, 122) regards several clauses as dubious. Dom Bouquet, in the *Recueil des historiens des Gaules*, considers it spurious and merely gives a summary of it. Today we have no hesitation in considering it authentic.

the history of the Empire was one of continual wars and disturbances of all sorts. The quarrels started by the partition of 817, the revolt and tragic death of Bernard in 818, the plots of Judith of Bavaria, the wretched scenes preceding and following the Emperor's public penance at the Council of Attigny in 822, the act associating Lothaire king of Italy in the Empire in 823; the unceasing chicanery of this new imperial power, that was called the Italian Empire, a power with its seat too near Rome, and the monarch, devoid of his father's piety or his grandfather's greatness of soul, incapable of maintaining order in Italy: such were the lamentable incidents of this period. Disorder and unrest were everywhere prevalent; but perhaps nowhere more than in Rome. The populace which, like a child, blames everything around it for its deceptions and misfortunes, then turned against that Pope whom they had so enthusiastically acclaimed at the beginning of his pontificate. Paschal I experienced all the disappointments of unpopularity. Some of the lords took advantage of this to make themselves independent. One of these was Ingoald abbot of Farfa, who succeeded in getting an admission of his absolute autonomy and in excluding the intervention of the pope in the appointment of the abbot of his monastery. A coalition of malcontents was formed, headed by two important personages of the papal court, the primicerius Theodore and his son-in-law Leo, nomenclator of the Roman Church. Their plan was to oppose the Pope, while relying upon Emperor Lothaire, who secretly encouraged them. The loyal pontifical militia of the agricultural colonies again interfered, seized the two leaders, put out their eyes, and executed them. Lothaire complained loudly. The Pope under oath gave assurance that he had no hand in the execution, but he refused to surrender the authors of the deed. So great was the excitement that the Pope no longer felt he was master even of his own followers. He fell grievously ill at the beginning of the year 824, and died February

11. The people were stirred to such a high pitch that the Pope's body could not be taken to St. Peter's Basilica. It was feared that some sacrilegious outrage would be attempted upon the body by those whose hatred pursued him even after his death.²¹

Pope Eugenius II (824-827)

The election of his successor was held amid considerable disturbances. The party of the rural militia and that of the military aristocracy were at odds with each other. If we are to accept the words of Paschasius Radbertus, the influence of the celebrated monk Wala decided the election in favor of the candidate backed by the nobility and the Emperor.²² On June 5, 824, Eugenius, archpriest of St. Sabina, was chosen pope. He was a Roman by birth. His biographer says that he was "equally commendable by the humility and simplicity of his life, the prestige of his learning and eloquence, the generosity of his soul, and the noble bearing of his body."²³ His short pontificate was marked by one of the most important acts in the diplomatic history of the papacy, the Constitution of 824.

One of Eugenius' first cares was to provide, so far as possible, against disturbances like those that had afflicted the pontificates of his predecessors. Their principal cause was to be found in the state of confusion and anarchy which then prevailed almost everywhere in Europe, in the lack of clear delimitations of the respective rights of lords and sovereigns, of ecclesiastical authorities and civil powers, of the pope and the emperor. Eugenius II opened conversations with Louis the Pious, who delegated for the negotiations his son Lothaire accompanied by the monk Wala. These negotiations resulted in a series of peace measures, such as the recall of several ex-

²¹ Thégan, *Vita Ludovici*, 30; *PL*, CVI, 418.

²² Paschasius Radbertus, *Vita Ven. Walae*, chap. 28; *PL*, CXX, 1604.

²³ *Lib. pont.*, II, 69.

iled personages,²⁴ the assigning of indemnities to the widows of massacred dignitaries, and especially the drawing up of the famous Constitution of 824, called the Constitution of Lothaire.

The basis of this accord was still the régime instituted by St. Leo III and Charlemagne, but various litigated points were now regulated. Thus the Constitution granted the Romans the right to be judged according to their law before the tribunals. The oath of allegiance was to be taken to the emperor, but with the reservation of the fidelity promised to the pope. Two *missi*, one appointed by the pope, the other by the emperor, would reside in Rome to receive the complaints of subjects against the public officers. These would first be referred to the pope and, if justice were not done, then to the emperor by way of final appeal. Death penalty was enacted against anyone who should inflict injury upon persons placed under imperial protection, and the penalty of exile against those who should disturb a papal election, which was reserved solely to the Romans. Lastly, each Roman must take an oath not to allow the consecration of the newly elected pope until he had sworn, before the imperial *missus*, to observe the present pact.²⁵

Council of Rome (826)

The Constitution of Lothaire gave the Church a period of peace and security. Eugenius II took advantage of this to assemble at Rome in 826 a council of sixty-two bishops. It published thirty-eight canons, most of them affecting the discipline of the clergy and the reform of the Christian life of the laity.²⁶ The first article, in most forceful terms, forbade

²⁴ *Loc. cit.*

²⁵ For the text of the Constitution of Lothaire, see *MGH, Leges*, IV, 545; *PL*, XCVII, 459.

²⁶ Mansi, XIV, 999 ff.

simoniacal elections. The next articles concerned priests and bishops. Ignorant priests were to be warned by the bishop and, if need be, declared suspended; following the decisions of popes St. Celestine and St. Leo, bishops should not be consecrated without the consent of the clergy and people of the diocese for which they are intended. They must not be absent from their see more than three weeks without the authorization of their metropolitans. Other articles are about churches and schools. Church edifices destroyed by wars and pillage are to be rebuilt. Schools must be opened at all episcopal residences, in all parishes, and wherever else there is need of them. Priests are admonished not to appear in public unless dressed in sacerdotal garb. They are to live in common in cloisters under the guidance of capable superiors who are responsible to the bishop.

Pope Gregory IV (827–844)

When Eugenius II left this world (August 27, 827), there was reason for thinking that peace was assured for a long time. But such was by no means the fact. The passions that aroused so many disturbances were not appeased. Two clauses of the imperial Constitution would give them free scope. The provision restricting voting at papal elections to Romans alone, unlike the Constitution of 769, made no distinction between the clergy and the laity; and the clause putting off the pope's consecration until the taking of his oath before the imperial legate would serve as a pretext for the emperors to take a hand in the government of the Church.

The pontificate of Valentine (827) lasted only six weeks. He was a native Roman of noble birth, brought up in the Lateran under the guidance of Eugenius, who loved him as a son. He died in October, 827, and was followed by the priest Gregory, also of Roman birth and noble family. Two serious

facts marked these two elections: the lay nobility took an active part in both of them, and Gregory IV was ordained only after verification of the election by an imperial legate. A precedent had been established; a breach was opened for the most harmful abuses.

However, the very force of circumstances led the popes to take an increasingly preponderant place in civil society. According to the testimony of all contemporary authors, Gregory IV was timid and hesitant; yet his memory is connected with the first fortresses built on the domain of St. Peter, and the first attempt made by a pope to take a direct hand in the temporal affairs of the nations.

While the Frankish rulers were quarreling among themselves, the Saracens were making more frequent raids upon the coasts of Provence and Italy. Already they had ravaged Nice and Civitavecchia.²⁷ In 831 they made themselves master of Palermo and advanced into Sicily. The whole seacoast of Italy was threatened. Who would rise up to undertake the defense of the alarmed population. Emperor Lothaire was absorbed by the strife with his brothers; the petty principalities of Italy, unwilling to submit to any common authority and nearly always at war with one another, were practically unconcerned with the defense of their country and of Christendom. The pope alone represented in Italy, not only the Church, but the Italian fatherland. The eyes of the people turned to him. Gregory IV answered this call. He fortified the city of Ostia and there constructed the fortress of Gregoriopolis, which is still standing. He had started to fortify the city of Rome on the side of St. Peter's, when death overtook him.

Papal Intervention

Meanwhile the affairs of the Frankish rulers called for his intervention. The breaking of the act of partition of 817 by

²⁷ *Annales regni*, anno 813.

Louis the Pious, under the influence of Judith of Bavaria, in favor of their young son Charles, the unpopularity of the young Empress, who was charged with most abominable crimes, and the blundering demarkation of the new allotment made to Charles,²⁸ rallied almost the whole population on the side of Louis the German and Lothaire. Until the excesses of the rebellious sons of the Emperor elicited public sympathy for the unfortunate monarch, their revolt seemed to be the cause of justice and morality and likewise the people's cause. Then this party was favored by the almost unanimous pronouncement of the most eminent members of the priesthood and of the episcopacy, the Archbishop of Reims as also the Archbishop of Lyons, the Bishop of Vienne and the Abbot of Corbie. The place of the head of Christendom seemed indicated. Gregory IV did not interfere until the very last extremity. We might say he was led to this intervention, rather than say he interfered. On an Alsatian plain near Colmar in 833, the two armies were face to face, ready to hurl themselves on each other, when the Supreme Pontiff, accompanied by Lothaire, arrived on the scene. He had sent ahead a noble and dignified letter, in which, replying to some bishops of the Emperor's party who had sent him a disrespectful and threatening note, he said: "You should not forget that the government of souls, which belongs to the supreme pontiff, is greater than the imperial power, which is temporal."²⁹ When intervening in the discord of the rulers, Gregory was aware that he was acting only in the interest of peace; he thought that no rôle was more fitting to his mission as father of all Christian peoples.

We know how his noble hopes were frustrated. The party

²⁸ The portion granted to Prince Charles, who later became Charles the Bald, included the two banks of the Upper Rhine, Alamannia, Rhetia, Alsace, and part of Burgundy; thus some of the Germans were separated from their racial kindred and were amalgamated with the Gauls and Romans.

²⁹ *PL*, CIV, 299.

defending the Pope was victorious, but by means quite different from those which the Pope intended to employ, means that dishonored the cause of the Emperor's rebel sons. Gregory left this field of Colmar, which history rightly calls the Field of Lies, with an embittered heart.³⁰ From that hour popular sympathy returned to the unhappy Emperor. Shortly afterward, the very excess of his misfortune and the detestable conduct of Lothaire detached from the latter's cause his warmest partisans.

Council of Compiègne

Three months after the scene on the Field of Lies an assembly of lords and prelates chosen by Lothaire met at Compiègne and declared Emperor Louis dethroned. The weak sovereign bowed before the decision of this unauthorized assembly. In St. Medard's Church at Soissons he knelt before the altar upon a haircloth stretched on the floor, and in trembling voice recited the formula of a public confession that had

³⁰ Voltaire (*General History and State of Europe*, chap. 22) and later Henri Martin (*Hist. de France*, II, 395 ff.) sharply criticized Gregory IV's intervention in the political affairs of the Empire. They maintain: 1. that this intervention was decided by motives of personal ambition; 2. that, to oppose it, the angered Frankish bishops thought of substituting for the régime of the papal monarchy the régime of an ecclesiastical aristocracy; 3. that, to defend his cause, Gregory IV relied upon spurious documents, the very ones that were used in forming the False Decretals. But an impartial study of the documents proves, on the contrary: 1. that the Pope intervened, not of his own volition, but upon the advice of serious men, and that for a time he even resisted their urgent entreaties; this is the explicit testimony of Paschasius Radbertus (*Vita Walae*; *PL*, CXX, 1635); 2. that the Frankish bishops, as a whole, did not at all take the attitude which these critics allege; it was only the party of Louis the Pious, assembled by the Emperor at Worms, that protested in violent language against the coming of the Pope and threatened to depose him; as a biographer of Louis the Pious says, they even spoke of excommunicating him (*si excommunicaturus adveniret, excommunicatus abiret*); *PL*, CIV, 299; it was precisely on the occasion of these threats, that the Pope wrote the letter mentioned above; 3. that Pope Gregory IV, in defending his rights, had no need to employ the False Decretals or spurious documents; the spiritual and temporal authority of the Holy See was sufficiently established by the most authentic texts and traditions. We will return to this last point when we take up the question of the False Decretals.

been written out by his accusers. Then, after taking off his military baldric and receiving from Bishop Ebbo the gray robe of penitents, he was led as a prisoner to the monastery of St. Denis. But a majority of the clergy rose up in favor of the deposed Emperor. Indignation broke out against the cowardly prelates who had condemned him. Nothing could be more bitter than the invectives of the historian Thegan against the infamous Ebbo, that son of a serf, freed by Charlemagne, whom Louis had loved as a brother and who was made a traitor by his despicable ambition. Louis the Pious was restored to his rights, and a meeting of prelates, assembled at St. Denis, annulled the acts of what it called the conventicle of Compiègne.

Louis was unable to maintain his authority. New partitions led to new quarrels. He died in 840, leaving the Empire a prey to the worst feuds. Three years later, four armies, in which nearly all the nations of Christendom were represented, met in conflict at Fontenay. Again we see the intervention of Gregory IV, still striving to prevent a fratricidal war. But the negotiations were fruitless and the formidable conflict could not be avoided. At Gregory's death (January 11, 844), the dismemberment of the Empire was consummated by the Treaty of Verdun.

Pope Sergius II (844-847)

Fifteen days later, the notables and the people met,³¹ and chose as his successor the archpriest Sergius. He was an old man. Born in Rome and in childhood left an orphan by the deaths of his father and mother, Sergius was brought up in the *schola cantorum* of the pontifical palace. Popes St. Leo III, Stephen IV, Paschal I, and Gregory IV showed much confidence in him. No sooner was his election ended, than a group

³¹ *Cum procures et romanae urbis optimates universusque Ecclesiae populus pro eligendo pontifice in unum coissent. Lib. pont., II, 86.*

of the common people acclaimed a certain deacon John as pope, rushed to the Lateran Palace, broke open the doors, and invaded the place with armed force. The crowd was driven out by the nobles, who took Sergius to his church of St. Martin and installed him with great honors in the Basilica of St. Peter. In the disorder of the political and social institutions, the papal office had remained the power most coveted. It aroused the cupidity of the different parties.

Sergius' first acts, such as his biographer records them, indicate a firm resolve to defend the rights of the Holy See with energy. Emperor Lothaire, angered because the Pontiff had been consecrated and installed without his participation, sent an embassy to Rome, with his oldest son Louis and his uncle Drogon bishop of Metz at its head, to protest against the violation of his pretended rights. The embassy was accompanied by a large armed force, that began by terrorizing with pillage the inhabitants of the Roman campagna. When the embassy appeared at St. Peter's Basilica, Sergius ordered all the doors closed. Advancing to King Louis, he said to him: "If you come with an honest purpose, for the good of the state and of the Church, I will open the doors to you; otherwise I will not let them be opened." And he allowed the monarch to enter only after receiving a peaceful answer. The King demanded an inquiry, which resulted in the recognition of the regularity of the procedure that had raised Sergius II to the supreme pontificate. Sergius then crowned Louis king of the Lombards. Then Louis asked that the oath be taken as ordered by the Constitution of 824. The aged Pope replied: "If we are asked to take an oath of allegiance to Lothaire, who is emperor, I willingly consent thereto; but if we are asked to take it to Louis, who is only king, neither I nor this Roman nobility can agree to it."³² He thus clearly indicated that Lothaire's right over Rome was merely a right of protectorate, attached

³² *Lib. pont.*, II, 90.

to the imperial office, and not a right of sovereignty, connected with the title of king. But often it is easier to resist a threatening potentate face to face than to hold out against the perpetual solicitations of a friendly and daily influence. Sergius had a brother, ambitious and rapacious, who knew how to bend the none too firm will of the aged Pontiff and also to win the favor of Emperor Lothaire. He was appointed bishop of Albano by the favor of the Pope and given the full powers of *missus* by the favor of the Emperor. His name was Benedict. Says the *Liber pontificalis*: "He was boorish, ignorant, and coarse."³³ He governed the Roman States despotically under his brother's name. It was a reign of simony at Rome. During the three years of this régime, civil and ecclesiastical offices were sold to the highest bidder.³⁴ Then, continues the *Liber pontificalis*, "as no one had the courage to rise up against this tyranny since everyone trembled before it, since no one seemed to remember that it is better to die with honor than to live in shame, the Lord, looking upon the infamy of the Church which He had redeemed with His own blood, manifested His justice by sending the scourge of the infidel races."³⁵

In 846 the Saracens of Africa came to the very gates of Rome, sacked the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul, both of them at that period outside the walls, ravaged the Roman campagna, near Gaeta routed an army under the command of the Duke of Spoleto, and encamped at the foot of Monte Cassino. They were diverted from that memorable holy place by a torrential rain. But, says the monastic chronicle, "as they

³³ *Pontificis frater, nomine Benedictus, brutus et stolidus valde, qui propter imbecillitatem illius pontificis curam ecclesiasticam et publicam immerito usurpaverat. Cum esset insulsus et operibus rusticis deditus. Lib. pont., II, 97.*

³⁴ *Per triennium, haeresis nefandissima simoniaca, et in tantum viguit ut publice venundarentur episcopia, et qui plus daret ille susciperet episcopatum. Lib. pont., II, 98.*

³⁵ *Lib. pont., II, 98 f.*

went off they gnashed their teeth and bit their fingers,"³⁶ as though meditating atrocious reprisals against heaven.

All Christendom was shaken with indignation at news of this. The Apostle St. Peter had been assailed in his own sanctuary by the soldiers of Mohammed; the ancient basilicas that Rome was so proud of had been polluted by the presence of the crescent. Truly Christian souls bowed before the divine justice. A great assembly of the Franks decided that a three days' fast must be performed by all the faithful to draw down the blessings of God upon a general expedition against the Saracens. The prayers of the Christian people were heard. The expedition took place in 847. The Saracens were driven from Italy, if not finally, at least completely. The weak Pope Sergius died on January 27, 847, and on Easter Sunday (April 10) was succeeded by the holy and great Leo IV.

Pope St. Leo IV (847-855)

Leo IV was good, generous, zealous for justice, combining the simplicity of the dove with the wisdom of the serpent.³⁷ He was a Roman and had been brought up in St. Martin's monastery, where he became the most regular of the monks. Gregory IV, impressed by his merits, called him to him. Sergius II ordained him priest and made him pastor of the Church of the Four Crowned Martyrs. There it was the clergy and people sent for him and, on the day after Sergius' death even before the deceased Pope's body was buried, entrusted the government of the Church to him.³⁸ Fear of an imminent irruption of the Saracens brought about this precipitate elec-

³⁶ *Chron. Cass.*, Bk. I, chap. 27. Cf. *Annales fuldenses*; *Hist. des Gaules*, VII, 64, 158, 161.

³⁷ *Extitit largus, pius . . . , amator justitiæ . . . , in cujus beatissimo pectore et serpentis astutia et simplicitas inhabitabat columbae. Lib. pont.*, II, 106.

³⁸ *Lib. pont.*, II, 107.

tion, which Rome had no reason to regret. The throng was instinctively drawn to him who was the most capable of defending it in the midst of the perils. But his consecration was delayed. Should confirmation by the Emperor be obtained first? The recollection of the Emperor's grievous complaints when Pope Sergius was elected and of the devastations by his army at the very walls of Rome, made many incline rather to an affirmative solution, which violated the Christian conscience of others. During the period of hesitation, the report spread that the Saracens were approaching. This was the cause or pretext for the consecration that was as hasty as was the election and that took place on April 10, Easter Sunday.

These popular panics were not groundless. By the mouths of five big rivers (the Tiber, the Rhone, the Loire, the Seine, and the Rhine), the Saracens and the Normans, encouraged by the internal disorder of the Empire, were invading Europe. In 846, Norman pirates made themselves masters of nearly all of Frisia.³⁹ Others carried on their raids along the Seine and advanced toward Paris.⁴⁰ By the Loire, others reached Tours, driving back the frightened people toward the Midi. At the same time, Danish forces, passing round Spain, entered the mouth of the Rhone and established their headquarters in the Camargue.⁴¹ Some years later (860), in company with the Saracens, they set out from there to pillage the city of Pisa and to lay waste the Italian coast.

Even more menacing were the Saracen bands that, in 842, sailed up the Rhone to Arles and the Tiber to Rome, settled down in Apulia in 840 at Bari,⁴² and spread out from there, bearing terror in all directions.

³⁹ *Annales Bertiniani*, year 841; Nithard, Bk. IV; *Hist. des Gaules*, VII, 64, 152, 164, 380.

⁴⁰ *Ann. Bert.*, year 857.

⁴¹ Poupardin, *Le royaume de Provence sous les Carolingiens*, p. 25.

⁴² *Chronicon salern.*, pp. 72-81.

Feudal Anarchy

The feudal anarchy did but increase. Only Charlemagne's strong hand had been able to maintain a little order in that chaos. In 845, the Duke of Provence and Count of Arles, Solocrat, and all the nobles of the district withdrew from the Empire and declared their independence, under the leadership of the celebrated Gerard de Roussillon, whose *chansons de geste* made him the hero of feudalism.⁴³ At the same time Nomenoe the duke of the Bretons proclaimed himself independent and was crowned king.⁴⁴ Others, without withdrawing from their suzerain, refused to march under his orders, as, for example, Eundachar, that vassal of Carloman, who, after swearing faith to Emperor Louis and his sons upon the relics of St. Emmeran, declined to move when the hour of departure came, saying: "St. Emmeran, on whose relics I swore, is keeping my shield and lance."⁴⁵ Sometimes the feudalists went farther, even to the point of felony and treason. In 835, two Italian lords, Siconulfus and Radelgisus, both claimed the duchy of Benevento and, to defend their cause, even appealed to the sworn enemies of the Christian name. Radelgisus called to his aid the Saracens of Africa. Seeing this, Siconulfus asked the help of the Saracens of Spain.

Emperor Lothaire became more and more unconcerned with Christendom, in particular with the city of Rome, and began a life of debauchery, the scandal of which broke out in 853 at the death of Empress Ermengarde.⁴⁶ The Romans com-

⁴³ Bouche, *Essai sur l'histoire de Provence*, I, 192 f.

⁴⁴ The declaration of independence took place in 845. Nomenoe was not crowned until 848, a year after the coming of St. Leo IV.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Monnier, *Histoire des luttes politiques et religieuses dans les temps carolingiens*, p. 232.

⁴⁶ *Defuncta christianissima Ermengarda, duas sibi ancillas ex villa Vegia copulavit . . . aliqui filii ejus similiter adulteriis inserviunt. Annales Bertiniani; Hist. des Gaules*, VII, 70.

plained of this neglect.⁴⁷ The betrothal of Louis the German with the famous Engelberga, celebrated in 851,⁴⁸ aggravated the situation by making the Easterners unfriendly to the West⁴⁹ and especially by placing intrigue and misconduct on the throne.

The harmful influence of Benedict, brother of Sergius II, had put unworthy ministers into ecclesiastical offices. The disciplinary canons promulgated by Pope Eugenius II, after the Council of 826, were no longer observed by a large number of the clergy.

The threefold aim of Leo IV's pontificate was to defend Rome and Christendom against enemies from without, to resist the plots and violence of the imperial power, and to restore ecclesiastical discipline.

The greatness of St. Leo IV's part in the defense of Rome against the Saracens evoked the admiration even of Voltaire. He says:

In this critical conjuncture Pope Leo IV, assuming an authority which the emperor Lotharius' generals seemed to abandon, showed himself in defending Rome worthy of being its sovereign. He employed the treasures of the Church in repairing walls, raising towers, and stretching iron chains across the Tiber. He armed the militia at his own expense, engaged the inhabitants of Naples and Gaeta to come and defend the coasts and port of Ostia, without neglecting the prudent precaution of taking hostages of them, knowing perfectly well that those who have sufficient strength to assist, are frequently powerful enough to hurt. He visited every post himself and received the Saracens at their descent, not in a military equipage, as Goslin bishop of Paris had done on a more pressing occasion, but as a pontiff that

⁴⁷ *Romani quoque arctati Sarracenorum Maurorumque incursionibus, ob sui defensionem omnino neglectam apud imperatorem Lotharium conqueruntur. Hist. des Gaules, VII, 70.*

⁴⁸ Boehmer-Mühlbacher, *Regesta*, no. 1148.

⁴⁹ *Graeci concitantur contra Ludovicum propter filiam imperatoris constantinopolitani. Annales Bertiniani; Hist. des Gaules, VII, 70.*

exhorted a Christian people, and as a king that watched over the security of his subjects. He was a Roman by birth, and the courage of the early ages of the republic seemed to be revived in him at a time of cowardice and corruption, like one of the beautiful monuments of ancient Rome, which are sometimes found in the ruins of the ancient city.⁵⁰

Emperor Lothaire, who showed himself so insistent upon appearing whenever there was any question of being honored, made no move to appear in person for the defense of Rome and Italy. He merely sent to the Pope, at the latter's request, a money aid to help in the work of fortifications. Leo IV, not content with protecting the city of Rome, rebuilt and fortified several cities in Italy, such as Centumcellae, thereafter called Leopolis, and the city of Porto, where he welcomed a colony of Corsicans who had been despoiled by the Saracens. In 849, to fight the pirates, he favored the expeditions organized by the Italian lords. He tried also to arouse the Frankish lords against the infidels. For this purpose he wrote to them, saying: "Put aside all fear, and fight with courage against the enemies of the faith and the foes of all religion. . . . The Almighty knows that if any one of you dies, it is for the truth of the faith, for the salvation of the fatherland and the defense of Christendom. This is why He decrees the heavenly reward for such a one."⁵¹ Following these measures, the Saracens abandoned their incursions in the direction of Rome and Italy. In a letter written by the Pope in 854 there is a bare mention of some supplementary works.⁵² Rome and Italy were saved by St. Leo IV from the Mussulman danger.

But Lothaire and Louis II were not satisfied with giving Christendom, in those painful circumstances, the spectacle of a deplorable inactivity. Inspired perhaps by the sad influence

⁵⁰ Voltaire, *General History and State of Europe*, chap. 28.

⁵¹ *PL*, CXV, 655-657.

⁵² *Lib. pont.*, II, 126; Jaffé, no. 2620.

of Engelberga, they turned against the Pope with attacks, sometimes underhand and sometimes open, with an opposition that showed itself especially in the matter of the imperial *missi* and in that of the pretended Byzantine conspiracy.

Leo IV's correspondence reveals the Pope's repeated complaints against certain legates of Louis II, who strangely abused their diplomatic authority. They exacted ransom from pilgrims going to Rome and endeavored to corrupt the papal officials by money or threats. Two of them, Peter and Adrian, in concert with a certain Duke George, brother of the Bishop of Ravenna, conducted themselves as real brigands, not stopping at pillage or murder.⁵³ They were convicted of assassinating the papal legate to the court of Lothaire. Leo IV protested, demanded that justice be done; then, seeing his complaints futile, he decided to act. He ordered the arrest of Peter, Adrian, and their chief accomplices, who were judged according to Roman law and condemned to death.

The Emperor presented a bitter protest that the Constitution of 824 was not observed. The Pope halted the carrying out of the death sentence, but withdrew none of his lawful claims to the right to render justice in the Papal States. Writing to Emperor Louis the German, he says: "You must know that we do not allow anyone to oppress our subjects, but, if the need arises, we inflict prompt punishment for outrages inflicted upon them, because in everything we must be the defenders of the flock confided to our care."⁵⁴

This was in 853. Two years later another incident revived the conflict. Although powerless to maintain order in that section known as Byzantine Italy, although largely abandoned by their vassals or allies, whose dependence had become purely nominal, the Byzantine emperors saw their connection with

⁵³ See the letters to Duke George (Jaffé, 2627); to King Charles the Bald (Jaffé, 2625); to the Bishop of Ravenna (Jaffé, 2628).

⁵⁴ *PL*, CXV, 669. Cf. *ibid.*, 657.

the Italian peninsula strengthened in another way. "If recent figures are to be accepted, 50,000 priests, monks, or laymen, who had emigrated from the East during the iconoclast quarrel, strengthened the Greek element in Italy. In Calabria alone about two hundred Basilian monasteries date from this period. The Emperor attached to the patriarchate of Constantinople the bishoprics of this district, and the monasteries, centers of literary culture, spread the Byzantine culture about them."⁵⁵

The Greek influence was further spread in Italy by the big commercial cities, such as Naples, Amalfi, Gaeta, and Venice, which, by their banks in the East, were clients of the Empire. Venice furnished the Emperor with auxiliary troops and even with fleets to help him in his fight against the Saracens. Cordial relations with the court of Constantinople were therefore not to be neglected. They were seriously endangered in 851 by the betrothal of Louis II and Engelberga, an agreement that was notorious because of the contempt for a promise of marriage given to the daughter of Emperor Michael III. In the meantime a report spread that one of the great dignitaries of the Roman court was conspiring in favor of the Greeks against the Empire. The governor of the papal palace, Gratian, was reported as saying: "The Franks are good for nothing. Why not call in the Greeks and, with their help, drive out the Franks and their kings?" Louis II arrived unexpectedly at Rome, furious and threatening, without sending word of his coming to the Pope or the Roman aristocracy.⁵⁶

Without excitement, Leo IV requested and obtained the introduction of a judicial inquiry, which was conducted according to the rules of Roman procedure. This was his right, according to the Constitution of 824. Following this inquiry, the denouncer of Gratian, a certain Daniel, master of the militia,

⁵⁵ Lavissee and Rambaud, *Histoire générale*, I, 649.

⁵⁶ *Sine litteris etiam ad romanum directis pontificem et senatum*, says the *Liber pontificalis* (II, 134). This mention of the senate indicates here the place taken in Rome by the aristocracy.

was convicted of false testimony. Out of deference to the Emperor, who interceded in behalf of the convicted man, the Pontiff granted him pardon. But it was the complete collapse of the conspiracy. The favor subsequently extended to Daniel by the Emperor and the Empress leads us to suppose that the imperial couple were not strangers to this machination worthy of the wicked genius of Engelberga.

These weighty matters never diverted the holy Pontiff from his dominant purpose: to preserve holy Church from the corruption of the age, more and more to imbue bishops and priests with the spirit of the Gospel. We find valuable traces of this purpose in two councils, one held at Pavia in 850, the other at Rome in 853. The Roman council did little else than repeat the thirty-eight canons of the Roman council of 826.⁵⁷ It added only four new canons regarding minor disorders. The Council of Pavia,⁵⁸ held in the presence of Emperor Louis, regulated the duties and rights of bishops, archpriests, deans, city priests, and country priests. It was remarked that many worldly bishops used to give sumptuous dinners, accompanied by entertainments in which jesters took part. The council reminded bishops that their place was in the midst of the poor and the lowly when they were not in their church for prayer or in their house for work and for conference with their priests. Terrible anathemas were issued against usurers. A layman guilty of usury was to be excommunicated, a cleric was to be removed from office.

The Pope's health was exhausted by so many labors; his approaching end could be foreseen. Then it was that an idea seems to have formed in the resourceful mind of the intriguing Engelberga: to put in the papacy a candidate favorable to the Empire.

⁵⁷ Mansi, XIV, 997 ff.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 929 ff.

The Apocrisiary Arsenius

Among the officials of the papal court, where the shameful dominance of Sergius II's brother had introduced several men who were capable of playing the unworthy part which the Emperor needed, was found a prelate whose morals were utterly removed from such as become a cleric, but whose outward bearing was as correct as was necessary to disarm his defamers. His name was Arsenius. He belonged to one of the greatest families of the Roman aristocracy. Bishop of Orta, holding the office of *missus*, for some time past he had been Louis II's agent at Rome. For him was created the office of apocrisiary of the Holy See, and in his hands were placed all the affairs of state. Hincmar of Reims, whose perspicacity had thoroughly penetrated that vile soul, spoke indignantly of his trickery and cupidity.⁵⁹ Arsenius had two sons, whom we shall see playing a very important part in the pontificates of Benedict III, Nicholas I, and Adrian II. One of them, Eleutherius, remained in the world. The other, Anastasius, intended for the ecclesiastical state, received a most careful training, thanks to which he became one of the best educated men of his time. Already he had been promoted to the first sacred orders when Leo IV was raised to the supreme pontificate. The new Pope ordained him priest in 848 and made him pastor of the Church of St. Marcellus. Anastasius thus became a cardinal-priest and, according to the canons of the Church, eventually a candidate for the papacy. It may very well be that already his family had definite ambitions for him.

⁵⁹ *Annales Bertiniani*, years 867, 868. John the Deacon and St. Nicholas I give the same testimony; *PL*, LXXV, 207; CXIX, 1178. The *Annales Bertiniani* are one of the most reliable sources for the history of the ninth century and fortunately supplement the *Liber pontificalis* and the *Regesta* of the popes. They have had three revisers: from 830 to 835, an unknown person; from 835 to 861, St. Prudentius bishop of Troyes; from 861 to 899, Hincmar archbishop of Reims. The best edition is that of Father Dehaisnes, in the collection of the *Société de l'hist. de France*.

But, from the time of his ordination until the death of Leo IV, his life offers a mystery that is still unexplained. Scarcely had he entered into possession of his title, when Anastasius left Rome and sought refuge in the states of Louis II. The Pope repeatedly urged his return to Rome. But still he did not come back. Louis II, obliged to surrender him, took refuge in delays and insincere excuses. Anastasius was anathematized, excommunicated by several councils, but still could not be found. Was he engaged in hatching plots? Evidently at Rome they supposed so, because an anathema was published against anyone who would dare to aid Anastasius in seizing the papacy.⁶⁰ To give greater solemnity to its decrees and probably to forewarn the clergy and faithful against any electoral campaign by Anastasius, Leo IV posted, above the principal door of St. Peter's in Rome, around a large image of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, the condemnations successively pronounced against the contumelious priest.

On July 15, 855, after a painful but fruitful pontificate of eight years, St. Leo IV was called to God.

Election of St. Leo IV's Successor

The *Liber pontificalis* tells us that, after Pope Leo's death, the electors unanimously called to the papacy the priest Benedict, pastor of the Church of St. Cecilia. What is likely is that the partisans of Anastasius made some showing in favor of their candidate, if only to sound out the general opinion. At any rate, two deputies, Nicholas bishop of Anagni and Mercury master of the militia, set out to notify the Emperor of the new election. On the way they met Bishop Arsenius, who tried to win them over to the cause of his son Anastasius. After all, Benedict had not yet been consecrated; there was

⁶⁰ *Annales Bertiniani*, year 868.

time to reconsider the election and to make a better choice. The deputies were disturbed. The Emperor decided that he would give his reply by a special embassy. This embassy, having reached a point forty miles from Rome, also met Arsenius, accompanied by some followers, clergy and warriors. Partly by scaring them and partly by persuasion, Arsenius completely won the imperial ambassadors to the cause of his son. A little farther on, Anastasius himself joined them. As they proceeded their numbers increased by the addition of all the partisans of the imperial régime, all the malcontents, whom Arsenius and his followers seduced. Some envoys of Benedict whom they met, were handled roughly. In short, it was with an escort of followers that Anastasius arrived before Rome. His entry was triumphal and insolent. When passing before St. Peter's, Anastasius took an axe and hurled it violently against the image of the Blessed Virgin, around which were posted the decrees of excommunication against him. They poured into the Lateran Basilica, where they found the pope-elect. He was seized, stripped of his vestments, and placed in the custody of two priests, John and Adrian, who had already been deposed by Pope Leo IV.

It was Saturday. The next day the bishops, clergy, and people were convoked in the Emilian Basilica. The Emperor's legates attended. They were seen in the apse, then circulating among the electors with raised sword, and crying out: "Proceed and take Anastasius for pope." In the presence of such violence, the clergy and people recovered their spirit and gave an example of remarkable firmness. In sight of the threatening swords, an immense throng cried out: "Anastasius is an excommunicated priest, Anastasius is not eligible." Some bishops exclaimed that they would be cut in pieces rather than violate the laws of the Church. Then, says the biographer of Benedict III, the people of the Emperor's side were seen exchanging a few words in German and then withdrawing.

Pope Benedict III (855–858)

Three days later Benedict was again elected. The next Sunday (September 1, 855) he was consecrated at St. Peter's in the presence of the imperial legates. Benedict reigned two and a half years. He was a gentle, pious pontiff. The throng of people that brought him the news of the election found him at prayer. Although his private virtues were praised by his foes as well as by his friends, he was without that remarkable energy possessed by his predecessor, and the early days of his pontificate seemed to retain the impression of the scenes of terror that marked his election. He kept the Bishop of Orta in the office of *missus* and of apocrisiary. He had Anastasius again condemned by a synod, but he admitted him to lay communion and provided him with the Abbey of St. Mary in Trastevere. After three years passed in the exercises of the religious life and in study, Anastasius reappeared in public life where, without further hope of obtaining the tiara, he attempted at least to rule the papacy.

Among the first acts of Benedict III's short pontificate we must cite the conditional approval given to the decisions of the Council of Soissons, held in 853 under the presidency of Hincmar of Reims.⁶¹ Some expressions of this council seem to grant to a metropolitan certain powers without appeal, independent of the authority of the supreme pontiff. St. Leo IV had refused to approve it, and St. Nicholas I condemned it severely. Benedict III judged it proper to confirm it with reservations as to the rights of the Holy See.⁶²

Other acts, in which we may see the influence of his faithful collaborator the deacon Nicholas, are the expression of a firmer policy. He summoned before him a brother of Queen Teutberga, who had invaded the monasteries of St. Maurice

⁶¹ Mansi, XIV, 977 ff.

⁶² Jaffé, 2664.

and of Luxeuil; ⁶³ he protested against the laity of Great Britain, who had driven bishops from their sees; ⁶⁴ he ordered Patriarch Ignatius of Constantinople to send him the documents of a trial brought against the Archbishop of Syracuse; ⁶⁵ he invited all the Christian princes to compel Ingeltruda, wife of Count Boso, to return to her husband's roof. ⁶⁶

Benedict III died August 17, 858. Before dying, he foresaw the tempest that was preparing for the Church in the East, where the machinations of Emperor Michael the Drunkard and his uncle, the unworthy Bardas, had just placed in the patriarchal see of Constantinople that gifted impostor whose name was Photius.

The Eastern Emperor might suppose that the success of his policy was assured. His candidate for the papacy was all ready. The imperial favor was now extended to a man whose learning and morals could give offense to no one. It was the deacon Nicholas, who had been Benedict III's chief helper and who, in the exercise of his office, had shown very high diplomatic qualities. ⁶⁷ The name of the deacon Nicholas rallied the support of all. And the Christian people had no reason to regret this choice. St. Nicholas I was one of the most untiring defenders of the rights of the Church, one of the purest glories of the papacy.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2669.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2671.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2667.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2673.

⁶⁷ On the official character of this candidature, the testimony of St. Prudentius bishop of Troyes is explicit: *Praesentia magis ac favore Ludovici Regis et procerum ejus quam cleri electione substituitur. Annales Bertiniani*, year 858.

CHAPTER XV

Pope St. Nicholas I (858-867)

THE new Pope, whom the Emperor treated as a friend,¹ was the son of a government official and was connected with the upper Roman aristocracy. In the earliest account of his life, we read: "He had a noble bearing, distinguished features, learned speech, and an air of modesty. Strict with himself, he was fond of living in prayer and fasting; he was generous to the poor, and the welfare of the people always found him their earnest defender."² At St. Peter's, amid enthusiastic acclamations, the people understood that they had obtained from Providence the energetic leader, the kind father, the saint, which the Christian world needed at that hour.

Besides the imperial danger, which was still threatening, besides the feudal danger, which was continually growing, there was now, since the elevation of Photius to the see of Constantinople, a Byzantine danger that had an altogether new gravity. Nicholas I withstood these three dangers.

The Papacy and the Empire

After so many negotiations, crowned by several solemn pacts, the relations between the papacy and the Empire remained poorly determined and were subject to dubious interpretations. When the emperor tried so earnestly to confirm the election of the pope, when the pope demanded so keenly the privilege of crowning the emperor, the precise question at

¹ The *Liber pontificalis* (II, 152) relates that the Emperor, after the consecration ceremony, ate with him, and they embraced each other with great affection.

² *Lib. pont.*, II, 162.

issue was to know which of the two was the vassal of the other; and, under the last popes, when the office of legate and of apocrisiary of the Holy See were exercised by a creature of the emperor, it seemed that the part of sovereign belonged to the emperor.

In the first days of his pontificate, Nicholas I, simply by his way of acting, without infringing in any respect, by observing all the diplomatic forms, took an independent attitude that excluded any idea of his being a vassal.

Ascending the pontifical throne, his mind graven with memories of the past, the attitude assumed from the very first by Nicholas will also be intelligible to us. From the outset his firm resolve seems to have been to do away with the uncertainty, the vagueness, that he was painfully conscious of in the existing situation. . . . The Emperor, who had but just left Rome, hurried back. . . . It was his influence that decided the election. The *Liber pontificalis* graphically depicts the independent attitude, that of a superior, at once assumed by the newly-elected Pontiff. The city was wreathed with garlands of flowers, the people, the clergy rejoiced. The Pontiff admitted the Emperor to private conference by inviting him to partake of dinner with him. In this privacy, he is said to have lavished marks of affection on the Emperor, and to have embraced him with a father's love for a son. The past was set aside; the new order, the new relationship had begun. Today, it is not vassal and suzerain who meet; or, if vassal there be, it is the Emperor. The dinner over, the Emperor withdraws to his camp, but the Pope, in his affection, quickly follows to pay him a visit.

Louis receives him with the utmost friendship, loads him with gifts and, not only goes out to meet him when he arrives, but holds his horse's bridle and accompanies him as far as the flight of an arrow, both when he arrives and when he departs. No pope since Adrian I has been so honored by an emperor. All the nobility of Rome witness the scene; all understand that the Pope, "beautiful of face, tall of stature, severe of life, generous of custom," has assumed the rank he means to hold in the world.³

³ Jules Roy, *St. Nicholas I*, p. 52.

But this was merely the initial gesture of a policy that would lead to more effective acts.

Lothaire's Divorce

Lothaire king of Lorraine, son of Emperor Lothaire I and consequently nephew of Emperor Louis the German, had divorced his wife Teutberga, the daughter of Boso, and married Waldrade. In justification of his conduct, he claimed that his first marriage was null on account of the incestuous relations of Teutberga with one of his brothers. No proof whatever was adduced to support this charge. But the King was set upon winning his case at any cost. He gained part of the Frankish nobles to his side. A court, made up of the notables of the kingdom (859), sentenced Queen Teutberga to the ordeal of boiling water. This ordeal, however, was favorable to her.⁴ Lothaire by his promises then succeeded in seducing two bishops, Gunther of Cologne and Thietgaud of Trier, who in turn corrupted several of their fellow-bishops. In 860 an assembly of bishops, at Aachen, extorted from the unhappy Queen an avowal of her supposed crime and sentenced her to confinement in a convent. But soon Teutberga escaped, retracted her confession, denounced the coercion practiced upon her, and appealed to the pope. A large number of independent bishops honorably complained of the methods of intimidation employed against the Queen.

Hincmar of Reims, despite his well-known attachment to

⁴ The ordeal of boiling water consisted in plunging a finger or hand or the arm into a caldron of hot water and lifting out of the caldron a ring or some other object that had been thrown into the water. The accused person was allowed to undergo the ordeal by proxy. Thus it was in the case of Teutberga, who obtained a substitute for the ordeal. These ordeals, which Charlemagne recommended for the purpose of ending wars and quarrels, which Hincmar championed, but which Agobard vigorously attacked, were plainly condemned by the popes in the twelfth century. Vacandard, "L'Église et les ordalies," in *Études de critique et d'hist. rel.*, pp. 191-215.

the national dynasty, had the courage to place the question before the bar of public opinion by the publication of his book *De divortio Lotharii*. In this he took up the defense of Queen Teutberga and openly declared that in such an affair nothing could be decided without the assent of the Roman Church, the mother and mistress of all the Churches.⁵ The Pope sent two legates, who took part in the national council convoked at Metz by Lothaire to settle the question. The method of governmental coercion, which previously had made almost everyone acquiesce, got the upper hand even of the legates. They made common cause with the bishops. The decision reached at Aachen was confirmed. The cause of public morality seemed lost.

But they had failed to take into account the energy of Pope Nicholas. The Pontiff summoned the case to his tribunal and assembled a council at Rome, which quashed the decisions of the Council of Metz. The Bishop of Cologne and the Bishop of Trier (Gunther and Thietgaud) were deposed. Neither the pleas of Lothaire, whose urgent petitions were inspired by the ardor of a guilty passion, nor the arrival at Rome of an army which Emperor Louis commanded in person and which lay siege to the city, shook the Pope's determination. Lothaire dismissed Waldrade and took back his lawful wife.

But soon the unhappy Teutberga, overwhelmed with insults and ill treatment by her husband, asked the Pope to declare the rupture of a bond which she regarded as intolerable. Nicholas was mindful that he had taken up the defense of Lothaire's marital bond not for the satisfaction of a queen, but for the safeguarding of a superior principle of justice. He did not yield to the Queen's entreaties. To his very last hour he fought and died in the struggle. After the Pope's death, Lothaire made reparation at Monte Cassino.

⁵ *PL*, CXXV, 623.

The Rothade Affair

In the matter of Lothaire's divorce the Pope had on his side the finer portion of the episcopacy, notably the illustrious Hincmar of Reims, the glory of his age. It was against the great bishop that the Pope had to contend in the affair of Rothade.

In 861, at a provincial council, the Archbishop of Reims suspended from office his suffragan Rothade bishop of Soissons, guilty of having unjustly deposed a priest and of having mismanaged the property of the Church. Rothade appealed his case to Rome. Nicholas I, in spite of a very able and learned defense by Hincmar, in spite of the support which the Archbishop of Reims received from Charles the Bald, obliged Hincmar to restore Rothade to office and directed him to proclaim that a bishop can never be deposed without the assent of the Holy See. Hincmar, in relating this incident in his *Annals*, is unable to refrain from expressing his bitter resentment.⁶ But again the cause of the papacy and of justice was victorious.

Hincmar has sometimes been called the father of Gallicanism and the Bossuet of the ninth century. May we not consider the issue of these two affairs of Lothaire's divorce and of the trial of Rothade as a victory of the papacy over the first two manifestations of Gallicanism? May we not perceive Caesarian Gallicanism in the affair of the royal divorce, and episcopal Gallicanism in the trial of the Bishop of Soissons?

Archbishop John of Ravenna

In Italy, closer to the pope, the feudal lay lords and sometimes the feudal ecclesiastical lords took advantage of the

⁶ *Rothadum a Nicolao papa non regulariter sed potentialiter restitutum. Annales Bertiniani*, year 865.

anarchy to terrorize the country, to fight against one another, and to extort money from the poor people. The most dreaded of all was John archbishop of Ravenna, who had the bearing of a warrior rather than of a prelate. According to his whim he seized the property of the clergy and of laymen, despoiled beneficiaries of their titles, deposed clerics without any legal formality, laid violent hands upon property of the Holy See, stubbornly refused to present himself at councils, and utterly flouted the Pope's authority, bragging that he had the Emperor's support. Nicholas had no hesitation in starting a contest with him. Upon John's repeated refusal to attend a synod, the Pope issued major excommunication against him.

The *Liber pontificalis* gives us a picture of the city of Ravenna after the papal decree; it shows us what was then the moral authority of the supreme pontiff and the respect for the spiritual penalties inflicted by the Holy See. Everybody turned aside from the excommunicated person and closed his door against him; tradesmen refused to serve him; from as far away as he could be seen on a street or a public square in company with an escort of his followers, people cried out: "Here are the excommunicated ones."⁷ John then turned to the Emperor, who at first advised him to submit to the Pope, "whom the whole Church obeys." However, at John's urgent request, Louis II agreed to intercede for him with the Pope. But this was in vain. John then feigned to submit. Like all men whose conscience has been stifled by ambition, with hypocritical exaggeration he made his submission, which the Pope deigned to accept. But soon it was evident that no real change had taken place in the government of Ravenna. Large groups of the oppressed people of Ravenna brought their grievances to Rome.

Nicholas then came to an energetic decision. He went in person to Ravenna and there, exercising the right of direct

⁷ *Lib. pont.*, II, 156.

and immediate intervention which the Church has always recognized as belonging to the pope, he received the complaints of the laity and clergy, passed judgment as a final court of appeal upon the cases brought before him, ordered the restitution of stolen property, changed the administrative personnel wherever he judged it useful to do so: in short, he commanded as master in Ravenna. Crushed by this bold stroke, John again submitted. But it appears that this second submission was no more sincere than the first. His contumacy was overcome only by his deposition at the Council of the Lateran.

The Pope's Popularity

While St. Nicholas made unworthy princes of the Church tremble, he became more and more cherished by the faithful. The people, understanding that love of justice was the sole motive of the Pontiff's decisions, came to him from all sides and set forth their grievances to him or asked his counsel. St. Nicholas was a great administrator of justice, as were St. Gregory the Great and St. Louis.

In the measure in which the Carolingian Empire broke up, that of Constantinople shone with new brilliancy. In 856, after the quieting of the iconoclast dispute by the great Empress Theodora, when Michael the Drunkard, her unworthy son, succeeded her on the throne, the Byzantine Empire experienced a veritable political, literary, and artistic renaissance. By favor of the Western decadence, the Eastern statesmen hoped again to grasp the rule of the world, and the writers made a pretense of restoring the high culture of ancient Hellenism. Caesar Bardas, Theodora's brother, became a patron of scholarly studies. Platonists and Aristotelians engaged in earnest disputes. The most brilliant and active of the frequenters of those literary contests was, at the advent of Mi-

chael III, a young diplomat, thirty-nine years old, who was called Photius.

He was the son of an officer of the imperial guard, grand-nephew of the patriarch St. Tarasius, related to the family of the Emperor through one of his uncles who had married the sister of Theodora and Bardas. Thus Photius enjoyed a considerable influence. But he was prouder of the prestige that came to him from his learning. His extant works—the prodigious *Library of Ten Thousand Books*, as he called it, a general and critical summary of all the books he read, a sort of literary journal that has served as a model for many scholars and has never been surpassed—gives us an idea of the extent of his knowledge and the penetration of his mind. Circumstances led him into statecraft. The unmeasured resources displayed by his adaptable and tenacious intellect have prompted some to say that politics and ambition were the great mainsprings of his existence. But, in fact, such was not the case. Photius was a man who considered himself, first of all, an infallible scholar, a superior mind, that everyone had to admire.

We may suppose he was honest in saying that he never had an ambition for the patriarchate. The great passion of his soul was a longing to be esteemed and admired, but for his personal qualities, not from any glory that would accrue to him from outside. He was convinced that he honored the patriarchal see, not that the patriarchal see honored him. It is true that he lied shamelessly, that he falsified texts, that he practiced hypocrisy in the means he employed; yet all this was rather to justify his acts and ideas, that he might avoid humiliation to his vanity, that he might not lose even a particle of the admiration that he judged due him, rather than because he wished to climb a step higher in the career of honors. Such immeasurable and stubborn pride of intellect brings about havoc in a soul and disturbance in a society, no less than do

the madness of sensual passion or the grasping ruthlessness of ambition.⁸

Photius of Constantinople

The man really devoid of morals, the commonplace schemer, was not the eunuch Photius, but Caesar Bardas. Intelligent but skeptical, gifted with real talents as a statesman but vindictive, spiteful, carrying debauchery to the point of cynicism, he made it his great task to corrupt his royal nephew. The court of Constantinople became the scene of orgies impossible to describe.⁹ Bardas, raised by Michael to the highest offices, publicly advertised his incestuous relations with his daughter-in-law. On Epiphany, 857, St. Ignatius patriarch of Constantinople, another John the Baptist, reproved him for his crime and, following the rules of the Church, refused him holy communion. Bardas' vengeance burst forth. He extorted from the young Emperor a decree of banishment against Theodora, the empress mother, whom he accused of conniving with the courageous Patriarch, obtained St. Ignatius' exile to an island of Propontus, and had Photius named to replace Ignatius.

Photius always protested that he had done everything possible to avoid that high office. Showered with honors, protospatharius, that is, superior officer in the guard, intimate adviser of the Emperor, universally honored for his learning, Photius, as an expert canonist, also knew quite well that his appointment to the see, which was not lawfully vacant, was null and void. The attempts to make Ignatius resign met with a determined refusal. Finally Photius yielded. He was a layman, it is true, but already it had happened several times that

⁸ This psychology of Photius, somewhat different from that usually attributed to him, seems evident from a minute study of his life and writings by Father Lapôte. See *L'Europe et le Saint-Siège*, pp. 65 f.

⁹ This is alluded to in the first edition of Rohrbacher's *History of the Church*. The passage had to be eliminated from the subsequent editions.

laymen were elevated by the emperors to the patriarchal see.¹⁰ The designated successor of Ignatius was tonsured on December 20, 857, and on the days following received all the orders. The second day before Christmas, he was officially elected patriarch by a conventicle held in the imperial palace.

For his consecration, on Christmas Day, there was found an interdicted bishop by the name of Gregory Asbestas. This son of the former Emperor Leo the Armenian was remarkable for haughty pride rather than for apostolic humility. As archbishop of Syracuse he had abandoned his post, following Saracen invasions. He withdrew to Constantinople and there was vexed that Ignatius should forbid his taking part in his consecration. In the Church of St. Sophia he was seen contemptuously to throw down the candle he was holding. From that moment Gregory Asbestas did nothing but conspire. As leader of a little band of malcontents, to which Photius also belonged,¹¹ Gregory continually opposed the government of the holy Patriarch; hence his interdiction *ab officio* by Pope Benedict III.¹² The rebel Bishop profited by a new occasion that offered, to take revenge upon his former patriarch by consecrating the usurper.

Photius' Hypocrisy

If it is true that Photius accepted his new office against his will, once he was consecrated he completely changed his tactics. Never did anyone maintain his prerogatives more fiercely or pursue his aims with more hypocrisy and greater contempt for honesty and justice.

If we are to take the word of Metrophanes,¹³ most of the

¹⁰ Hefele, *Histoire des conciles*, V, 440.

¹¹ Mansi, XV, 415.

¹² Hefele, V, 442.

¹³ Metrophanes, in Mansi, XVI, 415. Metrophanes bishop of Smyrna, a contemporary of Photius, is known through the fragmentary remains of a work on the Trinity and from an important letter on the events of his time.

bishops at first declared themselves against the newly elected. Ignatius' rights were so evident that it could not be otherwise. However, by all sorts of means these bishops were won over, one after the other. Finally there remained five bishops who still opposed. Photius disarmed their opposition by proclaiming and declaring in writing that he regarded Ignatius as the most spotless of men, and he would never do anything against him. The first assertion was hypocrisy; the second statement had a dubious significance, letting it be understood that Photius recognized Ignatius' rights and regarded himself merely as a coadjutor subject to Ignatius. The latter, out of love for peace, had said that he would yield to force, if he were given a coadjutor regularly appointed.¹⁴ This equivocation is the only explanation of the great scandal of a whole episcopacy taking the side of the usurper.

But Photius, elated by his triumph, broke his word. He pronounced Ignatius' deposition. The Greek episcopacy then divided into two parties. All the monks followed the party faithful to Ignatius; and the holy Bishop uttered the words that should put an end to every dispute in the Church: "I appeal to the pope, *Ad papam provoco*." ¹⁵ The clever Photius did not intend to remain behind hand. Appeal to the Pope? He himself addressed a cordial letter, a masterpiece of hypocrisy in which, after a profession of purest Catholic faith, he took from the writings of St. Gregory the Great the most touching expressions to deplore his own unworthiness and prostrated himself before the Roman Pontiff, asking for his prayers. Photius was perhaps the most irresistible charmer of men who has appeared in history. He knew it. He could boast that his friends loved him more than they did their parents.¹⁶ A saint like Cyril, the apostle of the Slavs, who had been his pupil and had ex-

¹⁴ Hefele, V, 444.

¹⁵ Cf. Wouters, Vol. II, diss. 28, p. 235.

¹⁶ Photius, Letters, Bk. I, letter 2; *PG*, CII, 601.

perienced the captivating influence of his words, never freed himself from a lively personal sympathy for this man, whose errors he deplored. Photius knew his strength. What he had obtained from the Greek bishops, might he not also obtain from the pope?

While an embassy, sent in the Emperor's name and that of the Patriarch, set out for Rome, loaded with rich gifts, Michael III falsely informed the Supreme Pontiff that the unfortunate Ignatius, under the blow of vague suspicions weighing on him, had withdrawn to a monastery. In short, the Pope was left to surmise that terrible divisions, as aftermaths of the iconoclast dispute, were on the point of breaking out in Constantinople, that a council would be necessary there, that there was urgent need for two delegates to be sent there. The machination was cleverly contrived. If the Pope could be circumvented, they would be able, so they thought, easily to win over his two representatives.

The cautious Pope, as is evident from his reply, was not at first glance able to separate what was true from what was false in these cleverly vague letters. He praised Photius for his orthodoxy, but he blamed him for violating the canons, and he sent to Constantinople two bishops especially commissioned to gather reliable information about the affair of Ignatius. The Pontiff reserved to himself the settlement of the question.¹⁷

Photius' next important step was to corrupt the legates, Rodoaldus of Porto and Zachary of Anagni. He succeeded in doing so, but not without difficulty. Presents, trickery, threats, all were employed; the two bishops withstood all these efforts. But at last their firmness was overcome by hypocrisy and sophism. In the spring of 861 they passed over to the side of the usurper. The gifts of the Emperor and of Caesar Bardas

¹⁷ St. Nicholas calls these bishops legates *a latere*. It is the first time this expression is met with. Even today the title "legate *a latere*" is applied to a legate chosen from the pope's entourage, *a latere pontificis*, a cardinal legate. Caprara, in 1801, was a legate *a latere*. Jaffé, 2681, 2682, 2683.

crowned their defection. These recreant servants of the Holy See even allowed the falsification of the Pope's letter which they had brought with them.

Photius then hastened to assemble a council of 318 bishops, whom he led into error by having Pope Nicholas' falsified letter read to them. Thus it was thought that the Pope approved the deposition of Ignatius and the election of Photius. In this council, which the Emperor compared to the First Council of Nicaea, Photius was declared to be the lawful patriarch, and Ignatius was condemned as having violated the canons of the Church. Severe measures were then decreed against the monks, who remained the most loyal supporters of the lawful Patriarch. The astute Photius, at the same time that he thus attempted to paralyze the activity of his most dreaded foes in the East, endeavored to strengthen his relations with the Western bishops censured by Pope Nicholas. Some monks of Sicily, won over to his cause, journeyed through Europe. A writing insulting to the Supreme Pontiff was circulated at Rome in 865. It was a kind of siege against the papacy, ably engineered by the resourceful and malevolent genius of Photius.

Pope Nicholas and Emperor Michael

But the great Pope, informed of what took place at the pseudo-council of 861, had already made the Emperor, the false Patriarch, and the bishops of the East acquainted with his indignant protest. The Pope's first letter, addressed in 862 to all the bishops and metropolitans of the East, set forth the truth of the facts, condemned the deposition of Ignatius and the usurpation of Photius.¹⁸ In a letter to Photius, the Pontiff complained of the falsification of his writings and maintained the rights of his primacy.¹⁹ In a third letter, addressed to the

¹⁸ Jaffé, 2690; *PL*, CXIX, 783.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2691; *PL*, CXIX, 785.

Emperor, he declared that he refused any confirmation of what had been done in the East, until the truth should be made public.²⁰

The plan of knavery, trickery, and deception had failed. There remained violence and insult. And these were used. Michael the Drunkard wrote the Pope an insolent letter in which he scoffed at the Bishop of Rome, charging him with using "a barbarous and Scythian language," and threatened him, swearing to level the Eternal City to the ground.

The fearless Pontiff was no more moved by the menace of violence than he was by perfidy. His reply to the Emperor is a masterpiece.²¹ In the first part the Pope firmly uttered his stand on the pending question: he declared that the Emperor's judgment was utterly incompetent in what concerns the internal affairs of the Church. Let the documents of the case be sent to him to Rome and let them be submitted to a regular procedure, and an independent tribunal would decide. Then the Pope's thoughts rose to considerations of the gravest eloquence. He says:

Do not dwell upon threats against us, O Emperor, for, with God's help, we do not fear them. . . . Rather consider what you yourself ought to do. Think upon the past time, consider eternity. Reflect what happened to the emperors who have persecuted the Church of God and especially the Roman Church. See Nero, Diocletian. How execrable their names are among Christians! See, on the other hand, Constantine, Theodosius the Great, Valentinian. With what respect their memory is recalled in our holy mysteries!

The Pontiff says further that incumbent upon sovereigns is the duty of not interfering in the internal affairs of the Church and of protecting her in the free expansion of her spiritual authority, and the great Pope gives two reasons for this duty; first, the Church is independent in her domain; since the time

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2692; *PL*, CXIX, 790.

²¹ *PL*, CXIX, 926 ff.

of Christ, the Church and the state, having each its own office, should not infringe upon each other: to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's; secondly, the Church is a source of peace for the state.

No doubt St. Nicholas entertained no false expectations about the immediate result of this letter. At Constantinople no account was taken of it. The next year (866) Nicholas profited by an embassy he was sending to Bulgaria, to place in its hands urgent letters written to the Emperor, the Empress, and several eminent personages of the Empire. Photius prevented the legates from passing the frontiers and brutally sent them back to Rome, still carrying their letters.²²

A little while later, the usurper even had Pope Nicholas' deposition proclaimed by an assembly of Eastern bishops. But his triumph was shortlived. The pseudo-council was held in 867. That same year, in the month of September, the chamberlain Basil, who, in the presence of the Emperor, had Caesar Bardas assassinated in 866, had the Emperor himself put to death and, seizing the throne, started a new policy. Photius in vain publicly joined the assassin of his benefactor Bardas.²³ He fell into disfavor and was confined in a monastery, while Ignatius was reinstalled (November 26, 867) in the see of Constantinople.

St. Nicholas died thirteen days before, without being aware of this victory of justice.²⁴ The rôle of this great Pontiff seems to have been less to triumph over the enemies of the Church, than to proclaim, after a period full of disturbances and on the eve of an epoch still more disturbed, the rights of the papacy

²² These letters are still preserved. They bear the date of November 13, 866. Jaffé, 2813, 2821.

²³ Hergenröther, *Kirchengeschichte*, II, 247.

²⁴ The writer of the note on St. Nicholas I, inserted in the *Liber pontificalis*, probably Anastasius the bibliothecarius, had not yet certain knowledge of Ignatius' reinstatement. He mentions it as a rumor, *sicut fama se habuit. Lib. pont.*, II, 165, 180 note.

that cannot be impaired by any hostile attack. To furnish the real portrait of Nicholas' pontificate, we must now sketch this doctrine of his.

Papal Primacy

St. Nicholas did not set forth in a special treatise his idea of the papal power in the Middle Ages. But, if we peruse his bullarium and his correspondence, we soon become convinced that this conception is the most complete that we can find from St. Gregory the Great to Boniface VIII. What characterizes his views, is that they emanate from a mind whose practical tendencies are found harmoniously supplemented by philosophical aptitudes. Most of the time he sets forth his ideas in connection with a particular affair, but always he endeavors to connect them with a great principle of religion or of government.

Theologians and canonists generally reduce to three the prerogatives that constitute the papal primacy: they are the primacy of the priesthood, the primacy of doctrinal teaching, and the primacy of government, or, to employ the classical terms, primacy in the ministry, in the magisterium, and in the disciplinary power (*in ministerio, magisterio, et imperio*). St. Nicholas affirmed these three powers with the greatest precision.

In the face of Photius and of the Eastern bishops, as well as in the presence of the episcopacy of the West, he proclaimed the supremacy of his sacerdotal ministry with unequalled force and clearness. He writes: "The pope holds the place of Jesus Christ in the universal Church; divine providence has placed him at the head of the universal Church and has made his apostolate the corner stone of the Church; the Roman Church is the mother of all the Churches."²⁵

As to the primacy in doctrinal teaching, which raised more

²⁵ *PL*, CIX, 813. Cf. cols. 785, 821, 864, 909, 915.

difficulties in his time, he affirmed it, if not with greater energy, at least with more insistence. In all the disputes agitating the Church in his day, he appealed to his right of supreme intervention. In the iconoclast quarrel, which some wanted to revive, he authoritatively recalled the decisions of his predecessors. In the predestination controversy, he ordered the monk Gottschalk and Hincmar of Reims to appear before the legates of the Holy See; for the difficulties that were stirred up by the writings of Scotus Erigena, he maintained the right to examine them and pass judgment on them.²⁶

In the exercise of his primacy of government he met the greatest obstacles. In the Church the three branches of governmental authority—the legislative power, the judiciary power, and the executive power—have distinct organs, but all of them are connected with the supreme head, who possesses them in their source and plenitude. St. Nicholas declared himself to be, not the sole legislator, but the supreme legislator of the Church. Before the heads of the state as before the bishops, he claimed the power to make and promulgate laws binding upon all Christendom.²⁷

As supreme judge of ecclesiastical cases, St. Nicholas affirms the following three principles: 1. in every ecclesiastical case, each party has the right of appeal to the pope, and the pope always has the right to summon the affair to his tribunal, whether the question is one judged by secular tribunals or one before ecclesiastical tribunals, by bishops or by metropolitans, by primates or by patriarchs; it is the application of the ancient principle: the pope judges everybody, and is judged by no one; 2. the cases of bishops, as being major cases, can be judged at Rome by the pope, even as a court of first instance; 3. even the decisions of general councils, concerned with con-

²⁶ *PL*, CIX, 786, 1019, 1119.

²⁷ *PL*, CIX, 828.

demning a person or of censuring a doctrine, have no value without the pope's assent.²⁸

St. Nicholas decreed regulations about the organization of the tribunals, the respective rights of the judges, the accusers, the witnesses, and the accused, the steps to be followed in the procedure, the publicity of the hearings, the value of the proofs, and the right of appeal.²⁹

As head of the executive power, St. Nicholas, while favoring the tendency to soften penalties, maintained his right to order canonical penances.³⁰ In his pontificate we see the continued practice, so vigorously disapproved later by St. Louis, of having ecclesiastical sentences executed by the civil power. That practice became a civil law two years after St. Nicholas' death by virtue of a capitulary of Charles the Bald (869).³¹ The holy Pontiff endeavored to moderate these penances. A letter from Nicholas I to Rodolphe bishop of Bourges in 864, contains these lines: "Penitents who return to military service act contrary to the rules; but, since you testify that this prohibition drives them to despair and others to seek refuge among the pagans, we leave you free in this matter to do whatever seems most suitable in the particular circumstances."³² Three years later (867), just before his death, he wrote to another bishop about a parricide condemned to public penance: "If his life, if his tearful repentance results in truly good works, let your solicitude appear humane and gentle toward him."³³ Such directions and such encouragements given to the

²⁸ *PL*, CIX, 882, 947. Cf. cols. 821 f.

²⁹ For details, see Jules Roy, *St. Nicholas I*, pp. 132 ff.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 141 ff.

³¹ Baluze, II, 213. A large number of previous capitularies treated of the performance of public penance under the constraint of the civil power, e. g., the capitulary of 822, *apud* Baluze, I, 629. The innovation of the capitulary of Charles the Bald consisted in giving to the Church the right to call in the civil power.

³² *PL*, CIX, 884.

³³ *PL*, CIX, 1129.

bishops, little by little led to public penance being replaced by almsgiving, prayers, mortifications, and pilgrimages, then to the complete disappearance of it.³⁴

Letter to the Bulgarians

One of the most treasured monuments of the legislative, judiciary, and administrative work of Nicholas I is the collection of decisions published under the title of *Replies to the Bulgarians*. The recently converted King Boris turned to Pope Nicholas for the purpose of bringing his laws into accord with the laws and traditions of the Church. The Pontiff's reply touched on the most varied questions.³⁵ We find, for example, the enumeration of the feasts that should be observed by abstention from labor, exact directions as to the way of observing fasting, almsgiving, and Sunday rest. The Pope insisted upon the absolute liberty that ought to be accorded young men to enter a monastery or to enter the state of matrimony. He reminded the King that marriage is indissoluble. He prohibited marriage between blood relatives of any degree whatever, as soon as the relationship is established.³⁶ However, in another place, he fixed the marriage prohibition at the seventh degree of relationship; this is evident proof that the law was not yet quite settled on this point. The Pope says that, in the case of a man accused of a crime, his confession should be free; it is unjust to subject him to torture, which produces only a forced confession and often leads a poor wretch to declare his guilt, although in truth he is innocent. There is no law, either human or divine, says the Pontiff, that can permit such a practice.³⁷

³⁴ Gosselin, *Pouvoir du pape sur les souverains au Moyen Age*, pp. 404 ff.

³⁵ *PL*, CIX, 978 ff.

³⁶ *PL*, CIX, 994.

³⁷ *Quam rem nec divina lex nec humana prorsus admittit, quum non invita sed spontanea debeat esse confessio. PL*, CIX, 1010.

We are not surprised that a pope so solicitous for the unfortunate professes a particular love for the poor. Says the *Liber pontificalis*:

He ordered to be drawn up a list of all the blind, crippled, paralyzed whose infirmities prevented their going to the various establishments where food and alms were distributed. The Pope appointed persons to bring them help to their homes.³⁸ His pious attention extended to all the Churches of the universe, everywhere protecting the weak, defending the oppressed, solacing all wretchedness. It appeared that the city of Ostia was not well enough fortified. The people had reason to fear a surprise attack by the Saracens; the great Pope provided it with fortifications and war machines; so that the city became for the whole neighboring country a safe refuge against all hostile attacks.³⁹

Hincmar of Reims

Amid the political preoccupations of his pontificate, St. Nicholas I did not neglect to patronize the progress of art and science. Says a German historian: "It is certain that Nicholas preserved that love for the arts and science which he received from his father. As in Greece, so in his reign much attention was given to illuminating and adorning with paintings of gold the magnificent copies of the Sacred Scripture. We may cite the example of an abbot of Monte Cassino, Bertharius, who has left works on the Old and New Testament, and on grammar and medicine."⁴⁰ St. Bertharius, said to be of royal blood, died a martyr, slain by the Saracens in 884. He was one of the lights of his time, but we have scarcely any details of his life. More illustrious were Hincmar of Reims, Ratramnus of Corbie, Paschasius Radbertus, and Scotus Erigena. St. Paschasius Radbertus died two years before St. Nicholas. Hincmar, Ratramnus, and Scotus Erigena survived the Pope for a

³⁸ *Lib. pont.*, II, 161.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 164.

⁴⁰ Baxmann, *Die Politik der Päpste von Gregor I bis Gregor VII*, II, 3.

short time. Through them the Carolingian Renaissance revived.

We have already met Hincmar of Reims. At first he was a monk in the monastery of St. Denis, then elected archbishop of Reims, in 844; for nearly forty years he was the intellectual arbiter of the Church of France. He has been compared to Bossuet. He was a lesser genius, but, like the Bishop of Meaux, he became the perpetual defender of tradition. The unwearied defense of tradition in all its forms is perhaps what best characterizes the whole life and work of Hincmar. When in the teaching of a German monk, Gottschalk, he discovered a doctrine marked with a spirit of novelty, he condemned the doctrine and the man with an earnestness sometimes excessive, but always sincere. When he became bishop of Reims, which preserved the memory of the royal anointing of Clovis by St. Remigius and of the crowning of Pepin and Charlemagne by two popes, he endeavored to perpetuate the traditions of his episcopal see by becoming in a way the tutor of the Frankish king. Thus we understand how at one time, as defender of the Church in France gathered about its king, he confronted the Pope, and at another time, as shepherd with the duty of admonishing the king in the name of the Church, he wrote to Louis III as follows:

Emperor Louis did not live as long as his forebear Charles; Charlemagne, your ancestor, did not attain the age of his father; your father did not reach the years of his father; when you are in the same condition as your father and grandfather were at Compiègne, turn your eyes toward the spot where your father lies. You and yours will soon disappear; and holy Church, with its chiefs, will continue to exist under the rule of Christ, in accordance with His promise.

Out of devotion to tradition, Hincmar defended the practice of public penance, even though it was being abandoned. He tried to justify ordeals against the stand taken by St. Agobard

of Lyons, who condemned these bloody trials as being a living contradiction of the Gospel. Through a mistaken zeal for tradition, Hincmar maintained against the pope the supposed rights of metropolitan bishops; but his opposition to the decline of clerical life was prompted by a praiseworthy devotion to the traditional customs of the Church. We have five capitularies of the Archbishop of Reims. They have this particular trait in common, that they were issued after investigations and the assembly of synods. Hincmar is rightly reputed to be the author or at least the first promulgator of synodal laws in France.⁴¹

Clerical Life

Revival of studies, reform of morals, and the proper performance of the liturgy were the chief aims of Hincmar's synodal regulations. His practical mind entered into such details that, by the help of these regulations, we are able to reconstruct the daily life of a priest at that period.

Every morning, after Lauds, the priests, who usually lived under the guidance of an elder priest, chanted the canonical hours of Prime, Tierce, Sext, and None in the church. Then they celebrated mass, after which they devoted their time to the labor of the fields. They remained fasting until the midday meal. The hour of this meal varied according to the season. Hincmar says this fast is necessary so that the priest may be in condition to assist the sick and the transient pilgrims and to bury the dead. From earlier capitularies we know that the priest had to be fasting for the performance of most functions, notably for administering baptism. In Hincmar's time, however, this rule was gradually being relaxed.

The priests used to meet on the first day of each month for conference together. Thus appears the custom of clerical con-

⁴¹ Vidieu, *Hincmar de Reims*, pp. 167 ff.

ferences. Hincmar was watchful that these gatherings should not become the occasion of a meal at which "too many goblets would be emptied in honor of the angels and saints." He also concerned himself with the meals that were celebrated on the occasion of the anniversary of a deceased person, when sometimes comic plays were given, with a bear, dancers, and representations of devils. Difficulties arose over churches built on the lands of the lords. These latter had the right of appointment. Hincmar forcefully protested against the consequent abuses. Priests are to be watched over by their deans, the deans by the archdeacons, these by the bishops, and the bishops by their metropolitan.

Hincmar died in 882. He was neither a philosopher nor a great writer. His literary style is diffuse, and his theological method consists especially in connecting a certain number of ideas with texts of the Church fathers. Despite his defects and errors, Hincmar is rightly considered one of the glories of the French Church.

Ratramnus of Corbie

Hincmar's celebrated adversary, Ratramnus of Corbie, was a man of alert and venturesome mind, ready to embrace new views. His extensive learning and the elegance of his style won him the friendship of the most renowned men, such as Lupus abbot of Ferrières, Odo of Beauvais, and Hildegard of Meaux. About his life we know very little. He was ceaselessly at odds with Hincmar, whom he blamed for uncritically accepting all the old traditions.⁴² It is said that he took unfair advantage of his high standing at the court of Charles the Bald to discredit the Archbishop of Reims. If this really is true, it did not destroy the esteem in which he was held. In 868, Pope St. Nicholas, shortly before his death, asked all the

⁴² For example, the tradition of the holy ampulla of Reims, mentioned for the first time in the writings of Hincmar.

bishops of France, in fact all the bishops of the West, to draw up a reply to Photius. The latter, in a declaration addressed to the Bulgarians in 866, then in the acts of the pseudo-council of Constantinople in 867, cleverly summed up all his grievances against the Roman Church. Ratramnus, a simple monk, was chosen to be spokesman for the West. His work, divided into four parts, is remarkable for its animation, scholarship, and logic. He ignores none of the nine charges that Photius made against the Roman Church; but he especially clings to the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Ghost through the Father and through the Son, which he demonstrates in the first three books. Next he defends the celibacy of priests, the insertion of the *Filoque* in the Symbol, and the primacy of the bishop of Rome. He concludes with these words: "We have replied as best we could to what you have written. If you are satisfied with it, let us thank God. If you are not pleased with it, I await your criticism."⁴³ Photius was unable to take up the challenge. At the very time that Ratramnus' work appeared, Photius was exiled to a monastery by Basil the Macedonian. Not long after the publication of his work, Ratramnus died (868).⁴⁴

St. Paschasius Radbertus

That he might be free to devote himself more fully to learning and piety, Ratramnus wished to remain a simple monk. His abbot, Paschasius Radbertus, resigned from his office in 851 for the same reason. In the famous Corbie Abbey, where, under the direction of St. Adalard and his brother Wala, were to be found Ratramnus the scholarly monk, Ansgar the apostle of the Scandinavians, Warin abbot of New Corbie, Hildemann and Odo of Beauvais, the monks were fired with zeal for learning and for the apostolate. Paschasius Radbertus was an exact

⁴³ *PL*, CXXI, 316.

⁴⁴ *Histoire littéraire*, V, 332 ff.

and penetrating theologian, a temperate and clear writer without fanciful flights. Perhaps more than any other writer, he represented the theological learning of his time, a scholarship that still consisted in compilations and recapitulations, that rested mostly upon the authority of Scripture and the fathers, without much enthusiasm for originality or philosophy, but a scholarship in which at times the spirit of inquiry awoke and pursued practical questions eagerly. Paschasius' commentaries on St. Matthew and Jeremias, his treatises *On the Body and Blood of the Lord* and *On the Parturition of the Virgin*, his biographies of St. Adalhard and Wala, are marked with the stamp of a solid, scholarly mind, full of pious unction.

Scotus Erigena

In the ninth century one man opened the way to metaphysical speculations, and he did so with an impetuosity and daring that disconcerted the minds of his time and brought him to the border of heresy. He was Scotus Erigena. This solitary genius, who founded no school, built up a system that had a powerful originality which astounds the thinkers even of our own day.

The beginning and the end of the life of Scotus Erigena are full of mystery. He came from Scotland or Ireland, was favorably received at the court of Charles the Bald, "that prince who was early taught by a mother whose erudition surprised the bishops, along with that Frank of energy and Byzantine imagination, who took delight in subtle theological discussions as in the designs of manuscripts illuminated with purple and gold."⁴⁵ Scotus Erigena's speculative genius, acute and mystical, unfolded freely. He translated from the Greek the works of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. That translation of the

⁴⁵ Saint-René Taillandier, *Scot Erigène*, pp. 48 f.

profound Neoplatonic philosopher of the fifth century ⁴⁶ disturbed Pope St. Nicholas. It aroused the astonishment of the most eminent men of the time. Says the learned Anastasius: "How was a man, born on the very confines of the world, able to grasp so well the meaning of that book, unless by an inspiration of the Holy Ghost?" ⁴⁷ In his chief work *De divisione naturae*, Scotus sets forth a gigantic system, of a pantheistic sort, that has led to his being regarded by some as the father of the anti-Scholastics, ⁴⁸ by others as the forerunner of German philosophy, ⁴⁹ and by still others as the originator of the orthodox mysticism of the Middle Ages. ⁵⁰ He says: "There is a sure way of reaching God—by studying our own thought. Let us consider our soul, let us there devoutly seek the supreme God, and, full of goodness, He will smile upon us." ⁵¹ The Church condemned the *De divisione naturae*. According to a legendary account, Scotus died in 877 at a very advanced age, slain by his own pupils. Hence the insertion of his name in some martyrologies. ⁵²

Question of the Real Presence

Hincmar, Ratramnus, Paschasius Radbertus, and Scotus Erigena engaged in two great disputes which may serve to indicate the progress of theological thought from Charlemagne to Charles the Bald: the dispute about the real presence, and the one about predestination.

The dispute about the real presence was a transfer to the

⁴⁶ The pseudo-Dionysius could not have appeared earlier than about the year 500.

⁴⁷ Usserius, *Antiquitates rerum britannicarum*, p. 45.

⁴⁸ De Wulf, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, I, 131.

⁴⁹ "Die Lehre vom göttlichen Ebenbilde im Menschen," *Tübinger Quartalschrift*, 1830; quoted by Saint-René Taillandier, *loc. cit.*, p. 269.

⁵⁰ Staudenmayer, professor of theology at the Catholic University of Friburg, *Scot Erigena und die Wissenschaft seiner Zeit*.

⁵¹ *De divisione naturae*, Bk. II, chap. 24; *PL*, CXXII, 579.

⁵² *Perpétuité de la foi*, Bk. XII; Saint-René Taillandier, *Scot Erigène*, p. 47.

Middle Ages of a conflict that, in early days, had divided Christian thought into two currents on the subject of the Eucharist: the Ambrosian current and the Augustinian current. How are Christ's body and blood present in the sacrament? By a real presence, St. Ambrose said, without denying the special conditions of that reality; by a spiritual presence, said St. Augustine, whose sole aim was to repel a gross "Capharnaite" interpretation, without denying the reality of Christ's body and blood. But in 831 Paschasius Radbertus wrote a treatise *On the Body and Blood of the Lord* and published it in 844 with a dedicatory letter to Charles the Bald. In this book, following the Ambrosian current, he seems, in his barbarous argumentation, less varied than that of the Milan doctor, and perhaps with a more naïvely curious mind, to pass beyond his master. What is present in the Eucharist, he said, is really the body and blood that were born of the Virgin, it is the flesh that was hanged on the wood of the cross, it is the blood that poured from Christ's side.⁵³ The only thing this flesh and blood lack is visible and tangible appearance.⁵⁴ This flesh and this blood are truly in contact with our digestive organs, they are our true nourishment as the liturgical texts say.⁵⁵ When he was asked what this nourishment becomes in our body, Paschasius, without going so far as the gross theory of the "stercoranists," evaded the question rather than solved it.⁵⁶

This doctrine at once aroused the liveliest opposition. The learned Rabanus Maurus, a monk of Fulda Abbey and future archbishop of Mainz, unable to accept the view that Christ's body can be digested, went so far as to deny that it is the same

⁵³ Here Paschasius Radbertus appeals to a text which he supposes is from St. Augustine, but which a better informed criticism attributes to some unknown person after St. Augustine's time. Cf. Batiffol, *Études de théologie positive*, 2d series, 3d ed., p. 367.

⁵⁴ *De corpore et sanguine*, XIII, 2; *PL*, CXX, 1315.

⁵⁵ *Corpus tuum, Domine, haereat in visceribus nostris* (*PL*, LXXII, 315).

⁵⁶ *De corpore et sanguine*, Bks. I and III; *PL*, CXX, 1267, 1275.

that was born of the Virgin Mary.⁵⁷ Scotus Erigena even declared that the Eucharist is merely a figure.⁵⁸

Ratramnus' treatise, *De corpore et sanguine Domini*, like that of Paschasius Radbertus, was dedicated to Charles the Bald, who encouraged the dispute. According to Ratramnus, the bread and the wine do not undergo the least change. They remain what they were. They and they only are what is digested, what nourishes us.⁵⁹ As to Christ's body and blood, they supervene and persist in substance, but *spiritualiter*, whereas the bread and wine subsist *corporaliter*. Ratramnus appealed to the texts of St. Augustine, interpreting them with an excessively narrow logic. And he eventually admitted that this impalpable and invisible body is not the historic body of Christ; what we see is one thing, what we believe is another.

This became a fresh scandal. The scholarly Hincmar, with whom speculation was not a strong point but who was firm in preserving the whole traditional doctrine, that of St. Ambrose as well as that of St. Augustine, although not clearly seeing how these two doctrines agreed, exclaimed: "What now! If what we see is not what we believe, then what we see is merely a figure, merely a commemorative remembrance of the body and blood of Christ."⁶⁰

Finally Paschasius' view won the day, but theological language had not reached its perfection. Later, a more thorough doctrine of transubstantiation, the distinction between the identity *quoad essentiam* and the identity *quoad speciem*, the admission of a sacramental presence, which is halfway between simply natural presence and purely symbolic presence—though not explaining a mystery that remains beyond human

⁵⁷ *Epistola ad Heberardum*; PL, CXII, 1554.

⁵⁸ According to a work now lost, quoted by Berengarius, *De sacra causa adversus Lanfrancum*; Batiffol, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

⁵⁹ *Panis et vinum nihil habent in se permutatum. De corpore et sanguine*, p. 14; PL, CXXI, 133.

⁶⁰ Hincmar, *De praedestinatione*, chap. 31.

comprehension—removed the scandals provoked by the somewhat reckless affirmations of a theology just beginning.

Question of Predestination

While the Eucharistic dispute was engaging men's minds, a still more spirited dispute was carried on amid tragic vicissitudes. About the middle of the ninth century, a report spread that a Saxon monk with stirring eloquence was sowing trouble in various parts of Germany and Italy, without hesitation raising, before the people, the most formidable problems of predestination, of free will and grace, and solving them by discomforting assertions. Rabanus Maurus abbot of Fulda wrote to Count Heberard of Verona, as follows: "We know that a certain quasi-scholar (*sciolum*) by the name of Gottschalk stopped with you, and there discoursed on doctrine, maintaining that the divine predestination is so necessitating that even a person who wishes to be saved and labors by a right faith and by his good works to obtain eternal life with the help of God's grace, is losing his time and labor, if God has not predestined him to life; as though God could predestine men to eternal death, God who is the author of our salvation, and not of our perdition." ⁶¹

Protestants and Jansenists have called Gottschalk their ancestor. Jansenius, Guizot, Ampere, and Michelet represent him as a martyr, the victim of Hincmar's rigor.⁶² Among Catholics, while the Benedictines of St. Maur,⁶³ Cardinal Noris,⁶⁴ and the learned theologian Berti⁶⁵ claim to exonerate the celebrated monk from any conscious error, other theo-

⁶¹ *PL*, CXII, 1554.

⁶² Guizot, *Histoire de la civilisation en France*, leçon 28.

⁶³ *Histoire littéraire*, Vols. V and VI, *passim*, especially in the *Notice sur Hincmar*, V, 544 ff.

⁶⁴ *Historia Gothescalci*, in *Opera*, IV, 681 ff.

⁶⁵ *De theologicis disciplinis*, Bk. VI, chap. 14, prop. 3.

logians and critics, such as Sirmond,⁶⁶ Petau,⁶⁷ Natalis Alexander,⁶⁸ and Tournely,⁶⁹ attempt to show that he really professed the predestinarian heresy.

We must recognize that Gottschalk's doctrines and life are not without analogy with those of Luther. The son of the Saxon Count Berno, vowed from childhood to the monastic life in Fulda Abbey, Gottschalk, upon reaching manhood, with difficulty supported the yoke of the monastery, for which perhaps he had no vocation. He attacked his vows and had them annulled by the Council of Mainz in 829. But his abbot, Rabanus Maurus, with the backing of Louis the Pious, constrained him to remain a monk,⁷⁰ having him merely change to another monastery. He withdrew to France, to the Abbey of Orbais in the diocese of Soissons. Eager for study, he then devoted himself to the reading of the works of St. Augustine and, from the holy doctor's polemical treatises against Pelagianism, gathered the most rigid statements on the weakness of man and of his free will, on the all-powerful efficacy of grace and of divine predestination. During a journey to Rome in 847 he preached to the people along his way, attempted to win disciples for his gloomy doctrine, and solicited the backing of Count Heberard.

Then it was that Rabanus Maurus his former abbot had Gottschalk condemned in 848 by a council of Mainz, which sent him before Hincmar archbishop of Reims, his metropolitan. An opportunity was offered to the ardent defender of metropolitan jurisdiction to exercise its rights in all their fullness. In 849 a council at Quierzy-sur-Oise declared the monk of Orbais heretical and incorrigible, and sentenced him to be publicly flogged, following the Rule of St. Benedict.⁷¹ But the

⁶⁶ *Hist. praedestiniana*, chap. 11.

⁶⁷ *De incarnatione*, Bk. XIII, chap. 9.

⁶⁸ *Dissertat. V, saec. 9.*

⁶⁹ *De gratia*, I, 244 ff.

⁷⁰ *Hist. littéraire*, V, 352.

⁷¹ *Regula S. Benedicti*, art. 28 (Solesmes ed., p. 101).

penalty which the holy patriarch intended to be employed merely as a fatherly correction, was apparently inflicted with utmost brutality. According to the account by St. Remigius archbishop of Lyons, the heretical monk was continually beaten until, half dead, he agreed to cast his writing into the flames. The monk then asked that the ordeal of fire should decide the dispute between Hincmar and himself. This was the most solemn ordeal. For this ordeal two combustible piles are erected in such fashion that the flames of one almost touched those of the other. The accused and his accuser, carrying the host in their hand, must traverse the narrow passage between the two piles.

Gottschalk's request was denied. But the excessive severity of the repression and especially the fear of seeing St. Augustine's doctrine involved in the condemnation of the unfortunate monk, led several powerful personages to take up their pen against the Archbishop of Reims. In this number were Servatus Lupus abbot of Ferrières, St. Prudentius bishop of Troyes, and Ratramnus monk of Corbie. Hincmar, better acquainted with canonical regulations than with the ideas of dogmatic theology, in attacking Gottschalk's doctrines had committed several errors. He also imprudently took as defender of orthodoxy a very subtle ally, but one who was dangerous, Scotus Erigena. The latter refuted Gottschalk's predestinarianism in a strange way. How can God, he said, predestine a man to sin and evil, since sin and evil do not exist? Since they are simple negations of being, how can they be the results of God's will? The sole cause of sin is the deficient free will of man, and its only punishment is remorse.

A council of Valence (855) decided against Hincmar's erroneous theses and against what was called the Scottish hodge-podge (*pultes Scotorum*) of Scotus Erigena.

The religious question now had its reverberation in politics. The cause which was approved by a council of the North and

in the jurisdiction of Charles the Bald, was condemned by a council of the South and in the jurisdiction of Lothaire. Opposed to Hincmar the metropolitan of Reims, was Remigius the metropolitan of Lyons. In a great national Frankish council (859) at Savonnières near Toul, attended by the three kings of France, Lorraine, and Provence, an attempt was made, in conformity with the wishes of Pope St. Nicholas, to come to an agreement. But men's minds were still very much stirred up. The solution was postponed to quieter times.

Later on, Scholastic theology would, so far as human reason could do so, solve the burning questions agitated by the imprudent monk of Orbais. Has God predestined certain men to damnation? No, answered a better informed theology, if we are speaking of an absolute divine decree; yes, if we speak of a decree consequent upon a prevision of the sin. Petau says this distinction was not far removed from the inner thought of Gottschalk.⁷² He made the mistake of maintaining it in a tone of disobedience and revolt. He died (868 or 869) unyielding, without making a retractation, in the prison of the Hautvillers monastery in the diocese of Reims, to the very end nursing a hatred for Hincmar and, with bitter sarcasm, jeering at the inexactitudes that had slipped from the pen of the Archbishop, who was not a deep theologian.

When, in 867, Pope St. Nicholas found fault with Hincmar for his cruelty, perhaps he was alluding not only to certain measures taken against Rothade, but also to Hincmar's behavior to Gottschalk. Thus, above the political disturbances and doctrinal disputes, the soul of the holy Pope soared in the serene realm of impartial justice. Between St. Gregory the Great, who laid the foundations of the Christendom of the Middle Ages, and St. Gregory VII, who crowned the edifice, there was not, in the history of the popes, a greater figure than that of St. Nicholas I, who gave the new world its laws.

⁷² Petau, *De incarnatione*, Bk. XIII, chap. 9, no. 9.

CHAPTER XVI

The "Century of Iron" (867-962)

A FEW days after the death of St. Nicholas I, Anastasius the bibliothecarius wrote to Ado of Vienne, the famous author of the martyrology bearing his name, the following lines:

I send you very sad news: our father and pope of venerable memory, Nicholas, passed to a better life, on the ides of November, and has left us desolate. . . . I beg of you to notify all the metropolitans of Gaul. . . . In God's name resist what they are trying to do against Pope Nicholas. It would be to destroy the authority of the Church.¹

This enigmatic Anastasius who, before he became a wise statesman, had been an able conspirator, was quite correct in his view of things. Like forces long suppressed, but their strength not crushed, all the jealousies and hatreds and brutal passions of this sad period were ready to break loose. The pontificates of Adrian II and John VIII held them in check for a little while longer. But after those two popes, there followed unbridled absence of restraint. The learned and pious Cardinal Baronius, in his *Annals*, calls this period "the century of iron." He says:

This century is rightly called the century of iron, for its grossness and its barrenness of any sort of good; a century of lead, for the abomination of evil that flooded it; a century of darkness, for the lack of writers. Let faint-heart souls not be scandalized at seeing the abomination of desolation invade the sanctuary; rather let them admire the power of God, who did not allow, as He did formerly, the abomination of the temple to be followed by its destruction, but preserved it through

¹ *PL*, CXXIX, 742.

Jesus Christ. Secular rulers, even tyrants, seized the Apostolic See and placed hideous monsters in it.²

It would be impossible to describe more freely and vividly the evils that afflicted the Church at this period. Yet we shall see that Baronius' description is exaggerated. Says the learned Hefele: "Baronius committed an error that does great honor to his sincerity. Although a decided ultramontane and ever ready to break a lance in favor of the Holy See, yet with scrupulous exactness he gathered all the wicked remarks about the popes, all that he found in the sources. But, with too much credulity, he preferred to sacrifice one or another pope rather than apply the knife of criticism to doubtful sources."³ Historians coming after Baronius have made this critical study of the sources. The result of the labors of Mabillon, Moehler, Hefele, and Hergenröther has been, not to blacken the picture, but to scatter some of the shadows and, at least partially, to rehabilitate several of the popes caluminated by two prejudiced annalists. We refer to Liutprand of Cremona and Ratherius of Verona, whose friendliness to the imperial power and bias against the popes are beyond doubt. The most impartial historians and most exacting critics now recognize that Liutprand "was gratifying some grudges,"⁴ that he "adorned with chronological errors his *Antapodosis* on the papacy of the first half of the tenth century,"⁵ and that Ratherius, "a surly, restless, contemptible man,"⁶ was prompted more by passion than by love of truth, whereas Flodoard of Reims, whose *Chronicle* is less unfriendly to the popes of the tenth century, "contains a wealth of precise and well dated information."⁷

² *Visu horrida intrusa sunt monstra*. Baronius, *Annales*, Introduction to the tenth century.

³ Hefele, *Beiträge zur Kirchengeschichte*, I, 227 ff.

⁴ Molinier, *Sources de l'hist. de France*, I, 274.

⁵ Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, II, xii.

⁶ Vogel, *Batherius von Verona*, II, 434.

⁷ Molinier, *Sources de l'hist. de France*, I, 279.

Pope Adrian II (867-872)

St. Nicholas I's successor was Adrian II, elected December 13, 867. He was seventy-five years old at the time. His lofty soul and generous heart were accompanied by a lordly bearing. He was born at Rome, the son of Talarus, who was subsequently a bishop. Adrian belonged to the family of popes Stephen VI and Sergius II. He was married, his wife Stephania was still living,⁸ and he had a daughter. It seems that he had been elected after the death of Leo IV and again after the death of Benedict III. Both times, however, he succeeded in giving some acceptable reasons for not assuming the papal office.⁹ Adrian began by profiting from the firm policy of his predecessor. Lothaire II came to Monte Cassino and there made his submission to the Supreme Pontiff, who gave him communion with his own hand.¹⁰ The new Pope had another consolation: Emperor Louis II, who had been betrayed and imprisoned by the Duke of Benevento, fled to Adrian and asked the Pope to enhance his prestige by a new coronation. Adrian, probably foreseeing the dangers that threatened the peace of the Church from the East and in the Papal States, had nothing so much at heart as the maintenance of friendly relations with the imperial power of the West.

One of his first concerns was to profit from the re-establishment of Ignatius in his see and from the good will of Basil the Macedonian, to assemble a council at Constantinople. The undertaking was not without difficulty. Photius had introduced into the ranks of the episcopacy several of his devoted fol-

⁸ In the ninth century, sacred orders were still conferred on married men, who after ordination were obliged merely to abstain from all marital relations, under penalty of deposition. Council of Worms, canon 9; Mansi, XV, 871.

⁹ *Lib. pont.*, II, 173.

¹⁰ A letter of John VIII, recently discovered, proves that this communion was a veritable ordeal. John VIII, enumerating the different forms of the *judgment of God*, cites this communion administered to Lothaire by his predecessor. Dümmler, *Gesta Berengarii*, p. 156. Cf. *Annales Bertiniani*, anno 869.

lowers, who were sure to form a tenacious opposition to the Pope's projects. Other bishops, won over to the side of Photius or terrified by the audacity of the hostile Easterners, dared not declare themselves. At the outset we find not more than a dozen bishops faithful to the lawful Patriarch. Later on this number grew to more than a hundred. The patriarchs of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria, placed under Mussulman domination, at first were not free to take part in the council. The preliminary demand, which the papal legates addressed to all the fathers, that they subscribe to the formulary of Hormisdas, aroused protests. Finally, in face of the legate's persistence, the refractory members yielded.

The first sessions were spent in receiving submissions and hearing protests. At the fifth session, Photius appeared, summoned by the representatives of the Holy See. Haughty and disdainful, the Patriarch remained silent, not answering even the formal questions put to him to record his identity. "Do you accept the decisions of Pope Nicholas and Pope Adrian?" the legates asked him. As he remained silent, thus refusing to profess his submission to the Church, they said to him: "You are, then, a malefactor and an adulterer in the Church." To this, Photius replied: "I remain silent, but God hears me." His questioners then said to him: "Your silence will not save you." And he answered: "Jesus, too, was silent, and He was condemned." This likening of himself to Christ, by so proud a man, stirred the wrath of the assembly. The legates, in the name of the symbol, begged him to submit. "My right is not on earth," he replied. The council granted him a delay for consideration, and dismissed him.¹¹

The tenth and last session was held February 8, 870. It was most solemn. In presence of Emperor Basil the Macedonian and his eldest son Constantine (who were acclaimed honorary presidents), of ten or eleven deputies of the King of Bulgaria,

¹¹ Mansi, XVI, 74, 339; Hefele, V, 624-626.

and of three envoys of Emperor Louis II (Suppo a relative of Engelberga, Eberard the imperial majordomo, and Anastasius the bibliothecarius of the Holy See), the canons decreed by the fathers of the council were read. It was the Eighth Ecumenical Council. The decrees condemned Photius, his doctrines, and his sect. Then, applying the remedy to the source of the evil, they reprovved the encroachments of the lay power upon the rights of the Church and of the hierarchy. In the fourteenth canon we read; "Bishops must not any more go forward to meet the great ones of the world; when meeting them, the bishops must not bend their knee to them, but must have the courage to blame them, if that is necessary for the amendment of their ways." Rulers may be admitted to a council, but it would be false to claim that their presence is requisite (canon 17; in the Greek, canon 12). No great one of the world may, under pain of anathema, interfere in any way in the election of a bishop (canon 22). Every election held under the pressure of secular powers will be tainted with nullity (canon 12). Pope Adrian II, to show his friendliness toward the Eastern Church, accorded to the five patriarchs certain prerogatives that St. Leo the Great and St. Nicholas had refused them: for example, enlarged rights of jurisdiction over the metropolitans, and the privilege of convoking patriarchal councils and presiding at them (canon 17).

The Church in Bulgaria

A cloud remained on the horizon. The court of Constantinople was not yet consoled at seeing the Bulgarians pass from the Byzantine influence and take their stand under the dependence of the patriarch of Rome. Photius' mind was always oppressed by the failure of his encyclical to the Church of Bulgaria.¹² It was in Bulgaria that he encountered the fiercest of

¹² Photius, *Letters*, Bk. I, letter 13; *PG*, CII, 724 ff.

his foes, Bishop Formosus, who, ardently denouncing whatever came from Byzantium (the Photian heresy, the marriage of priests, and the Greek rite), waged relentless warfare upon the persons and the institutions of the East. For a while King Boris even hoped to put Formosus at the head of his Church, making him a sort of patriarch whose emperor he would be, and thus setting up, in the face of the Byzantine Empire and patriarchate, the Bulgarian Empire and patriarchate. But Pope Nicholas did not lend his approval to the realization of that ambitious design and abruptly terminated Formosus' mission in Bulgaria.¹³ Hence arose a coolness between the King of the Bulgarians and the court of Rome. Constantinople profited by this. It had invited to be present at the council the envoys of Bulgaria, sent by the Bulgarian King. Three days after the closing of the council's labors, there took place in the imperial palace, between the Emperor, Patriarch Ignatius, the delegates of the Eastern patriarchs, the Bulgarian deputies, and the papal legates, a meeting that was a sort of revenge by the Byzantine court and Photius against the victory of the Roman cause at the council.

The Emperor, the representatives of the Eastern Church, and Patriarch Ignatius, who was perhaps too complacent under the circumstances, all maintained that Bulgaria, having formerly belonged to the Greek Empire and having received the first preaching of the Gospel from Greek priests, ought to be subject only to the patriarchate of Constantinople. In vain the legates objected that Bulgaria had freely submitted to the Roman Church, that it was part of the Illyrian provinces, a dependence of Rome from time immemorial, that its full conversion was the work of Latin missionaries, and that the pope, supreme head of the Church, could not make his decisions dependent upon purely political considerations. The conference decided that henceforth Bulgaria would be attached to the

¹³ *Lib. pont.*, II, 165.

diocese of Constantinople, and the report of this decision was fraudulently annexed to the acts of the ecumenical council.¹⁴

And this was not all. The papal legates, while on their return journey, were set upon and plundered by Slav pirates. The followers of Photius, profiting by this incident, circulated falsified acts of the council, thinking that they alone were in possession of the genuine acts. But the sharp statesman Anastasius, who was present at the council as legate of Louis II, had taken the precaution to copy the genuine documents for his own personal use. Through him the authentic acts of the ecumenical council of 869 have come down to us.

This unusual person, who had insolently intrigued to obtain the papacy, this priest excommunicated by St. Leo IV, had reformed in his retirement. Secretary of Nicholas I, who used his eminent abilities in diplomacy and administration, this former rebel became the most capable defender of the papal power. His private life is a mystery. In many respects his public career was a blessing. In the Pope's disputes with Photius, it was generally Anastasius who held the pen and placed the abundance of his erudition in the service of orthodoxy. Adrian II kept him in office as chief secretary of papal letters and appointed him *bibliothecarius* of the Roman Church.¹⁵ Under the authority of a Pontiff whose perspicacity and firmness were not those of St. Nicholas, did Anastasius' old ambition revive? Were his father and his brother the only ones to blame for the mysterious and bloody drama that clouded Adrian II's last years and so seriously injured the prestige of the papacy?

¹⁴ Mansi, XVI, 11; *PL*, CXXIX, 21 ff.; Baronius, year 869; Hefele, V, 657-661.

¹⁵ *Annales Bertiniani*, year 868. The bibliothecarius of the Roman Church was a very important personage: he was the one to whom people had to go when, for the decision of weighty affairs, the early documents must be consulted. The *Liber pontificalis* makes frequent mention of the bibliothecarius of the Holy See. The first known bibliothecarius is Gregory, who afterward became Gregory II. *Lib. pont.*, I, 396, 10. Cf. Ducange, *Glossarium*, under the word *Bibliothecarius*.

Arsenius

For some time Anastasius seemed to be free from the dominance of his father Arsenius. The latter, still apocrisiarius of the Holy See, was too zealous a partisan of the imperial power. Anastasius had thwarted him on this point.¹⁶ St. Nicholas, who made use of the services of Arsenius as also of his son, did not spare him on occasion. One day when the pompous Bishop of Orta entered a procession, clothed in a gorgeous pelisse in the Jewish style, the Pope, in great displeasure, ordered him to remove the garment.¹⁷ Another time the Pope, having grounds for supposing that certain monies, intended for the papal treasury, had in reality passed into the cash-box of the apocrisiarius, called upon him for a strict accounting.¹⁸

Under Adrian II the ambition of Arsenius knew no bounds. He had failed to place his son Anastasius in the see of St. Peter. He attempted to make his son Eleutherius a member of the papal family by marriage. Pope Adrian, who was married before receiving major orders, had a daughter. If Eleutherius were to be married to the Pope's daughter, the position of the apocrisiarius would be strengthened and enhanced. But Adrian, having already promised his daughter in marriage to another suitor, refused his consent. Then Eleutherius tried a coup de force. He seized the daughter and the wife of the Pope. When Emperor Louis, at Adrian's request, sent soldiers in pursuit of the ravisher, the latter, tracked by the imperial police, assassinated both the wife and the daughter of the Pontiff. Meanwhile Arsenius went to Southern Italy, where the imperial court then was, to intercede with it and there to intrigue with some Frankish princes. But he was taken suddenly ill and died without receiving the last sacra-

¹⁶ Duchesne, *Les premiers temps de l'État pontifical*, p. 246.

¹⁷ John the Deacon, *Life of St. Gregory the Great*, Bk. IV, chap. 50.; *PL*, LXXV, 207.

¹⁸ *PL*, CXIX, 1178.

ments. His servants, purposing to carry his body back to Rome, reached the neighborhood of Monte Cassino and were there so hampered by the nauseating stench that came from the coffin that they hurriedly buried the body of the apocrisiarius in a field of the abbey. The monks, who witnessed the scene, recorded the event in their archives.¹⁹

Eleutherius, arrested and condemned, was put to death. Anastasius, suspected of having advised the crime, was excommunicated by Adrian. But in the presence of an assembly of the Roman clergy, he succeeded in freeing himself from blame, and the Pope restored him to his office.

This scandal, in which Adrian was merely the unfortunate victim, affected the popular opinion regarding the Pope and the papacy. Later, under John VIII, even in the monasteries people were still talking of the bloody affair and disrespectfully introducing into the scandal the name of the worthy pope. Adrian's successor was obliged to send to Bertharius abbot of Monte Cassino this vigorous remonstrance: "Who are you, to speak in such a way about so great a pope, to gnaw his body like a dog?"²⁰

In the Pope's entourage, making a sort of perpetual assault upon the sovereign pontificate, were other personages far from commendable, such as that Sergius master of the militia, who had married a niece of Nicholas I and, at her uncle's death, had laid hands on the money intended for works of charity.²¹ And there was that other master of the militia, George of Aventino, a dissolute robber and an assassin, who had entered the family of Pope Benedict III, and who later, convicted by papal justice, had his eyes gouged out.²²

¹⁹ *Bibliotheca cassinensis*, III, 139 f.; *Annales Bertiniani*, year 868.

²⁰ Loewenfeld, *Epistolae pontificum romanorum ineditae*, p. 25. Quoted by Lapôtre, p. 223.

²¹ *PL*, CXXVI, 678.

²² Jaffé, p. 427, no. 3400; *MGH, Scriptores*, III, 199. These two documents speak of Gregory of Aventino. In other documents this same person is called George of Aventino. *PL*, CXXVI, 677 f.

Bishop Formosus

Of an altogether different moral character was a man on whom Adrian kept his eyes to the end of his life. It was the bishop of Porto, Formosus, whom Pope Nicholas had sent in 866 to the King of the Bulgarians, and whom the latter wished to make a patriarch. Ordered to return to his diocese of Porto, Formosus obeyed, but swore that some day he would leave it to fight against the wicked influence of the Eastern priests. Intelligent, clever, overbearing, and obstinate, the Bishop of Porto continually kept his mind on Bulgaria. His thin features and his austere morals gave him the prestige of holiness. Never had he been seen to eat meat or drink wine. Later on it was learned that throughout his life he wore a haircloth the warp of which became incrustated in his flesh. The Bishop of Porto was a power. Pope Adrian had the courage to refuse his transfer to Bulgaria.²³ Such a transfer would have been against the canon law of the period, which forbade the transfer of a bishop from one diocese to another. Furthermore, with his narrow views, and his absolute antipathy toward the Eastern rites, his overbearing and unbending manner, Formosus, despite his real virtues, risked endangering the cause of the Latin Church. But, by keeping him in Italy, the Pope had not avoided all peril. Around the Bishop of Porto there gathered a party of malcontents. Even very close to him were to be seen men of notoriously evil repute, but much feared, like George of Aventino. When, in November 872, Adrian II died, the worst catastrophes were to be feared.

Pope John VIII (872–882)

Pope Adrian's successor, elected in December, 872, was the archdeacon John, a native of Rome, the son of Guido. This is all the *Liber pontificalis* tells us of him. From another source

²³ *Lib. pont.*, II, 185.

we know he was old and frequently sick. John VIII deserves to be reckoned among the great popes. The failure of his undertakings should be blamed upon the evils of his time, but not upon the weakness of his character. The new Pope, glancing over the Christian world after his elevation to the papacy, would have found a few reasons for consolation. In the North, in Great Britain, Alfred the Great, after establishing peace in his kingdom, introduced a revival of learning and gave his people the benefit of laws prompted by the spirit and teachings of Christianity; in the South, Christian Spain, which had just erected the provinces of Navarre and Castile into a kingdom, was continuing its heroic struggle against the Moors. But in France and in Italy the strife was ceaselessly continued between the descendants of Charlemagne. For a quarter century past, the cause of the Frankish Empire, by the very force of things, became more and more bound to the cause of the papacy. Soon the latter would have the heavy responsibility of deciding between Charles the Bald and Louis the German. While the Saracens and the Normans were ravaging Gaul and Italy, Photius in the East and the friends of Formosus at Rome were hatching fresh plots. John VIII has frequently been judged unjustly. What was really flexibility of mind in his case was called fickleness of character; what was prudence was called weakness. True, finally the rising flood of greed and hatred overwhelmed him. But the sick old man who, shaking with fever, mounted his horse and rode at the head of his troops against the Saracen pirates, was not a cowardly soul. The builder of fortresses, the tireless negotiator, the terrible administrator of justice—John VIII was all this—had nothing about him that could suggest, even to wickedness and envy, the absurd fable of the Popess Joan.²⁴

²⁴ Weighty historians, such as Baronius, Mai, Hergenröther, have thought the fable of Popess Joanna originated in the evil impression produced by the weakness and fickleness of John VIII. This opinion is no longer tenable.

We can connect the whole history of John VIII's pontificate with four principal episodes: the crowning of Charles the Bald, the restoration of Photius to the see of Constantinople, the excommunication of Formosus, and the struggle against the Saracens.

Crowning of Charles the Bald

Like Nicholas I and Adrian II, John VIII at the very outset seemed to perceive that the one power most suited to aid him in his work, to help him drive the Saracens out of Christendom, to put down the activities of Italian dukes and the plots of the Roman factions, was a well consolidated imperial power, free from every compromising suspicion, entrusted to an energetic and capable man. Following the example of his two predecessors,²⁵ he turned his eyes to Charles the Bald, who seemed to possess the qualities of an emperor. When, after the death of Louis II, the choice fell between Charles the Bald and Louis the German, Adrian did not hesitate. He called the King of Western France to Rome and (December 25, 875)²⁶ in St. Peter's Basilica anointed him and placed the imperial crown upon his head.

Historians have considered Charles the Bald as a timid and craven king,²⁷ surrendering to the pope all his essential rights of emperor and letting his nobles strip him of all the most important prerogatives of his title of king. Some historians have

²⁵ St. Nicholas and Adrian already planned to crown Charles the Bald emperor. Cf. *PL*, CXXVI, 669, and CXXII, 1320.

²⁶ *Annales Bertiniani*, year 876. These *Annales*, following the custom of the time, began the year on Christmas Day. Therefore they reckon December 25, 875, as the first day of 876.

²⁷ These are the expression of the Fulda annalist (*Annales Fuldenses*, years 875, 876), who detested Charles the Bald. The labors of Father Lapôte and Emile Bourgeois show the character of Charles the Bald in a more favorable light. Cf. Lapôte, *L'Europe et le Saint-Siège*, pp. 265 ff.; Bourgeois, *Le capitulaire de Kiersy-sur-Oise*, chaps. 5 and 6; Lavissee, *Hist. de France*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 389; De Smedt, "Le pape Jean VIII" in the *Rev. des quest. hist.*, 1896, pp. 180 ff.

passed a severe judgment upon John VIII's initiative, and others regard it as a problem. A more exact knowledge of Charles the Bald's warlike and administrative qualities justifies the measures taken by John VIII and gives us a better comprehension and fairer appreciation of the new conception, or, to use the Emperor's words, "the renewal of the Empire"²⁸ which Charles elaborated in Italy and which he had approved on June 30, 876, at the assembly of Ponthion. Italy was to enter into the imperial system on a par with France, directly subject to the emperor, but protected along its frontiers by the three great marquisates of Friuli, Spoleto, and Tuscany, and by the pope himself, who, as a sort of margrave, would watch over the southern part of the peninsula. The imperial organization, amplified and unified, would thus be more closely connected with the Eternal City as with its center; and the new Emperor, to symbolize the new ideal, would dress in dalmatic, would carry the scepter and wear the diadem, and would take the title of Augustus. The course of events showed that Europe was not ready for such an ideal, but the plan, though not free from vain display, possessed a certain grandeur.

Fifteen months after the assembly of Ponthion, where Charles the Bald appeared in all the pomp of his new costume, he was suddenly stricken with fever and died in a hut at the foot of Mt. Cenis, October 6, 877. He was fifty-four years old.

At the very time when the great projects of imperial revival were failing in the West, John VIII's attention was called to the East.

Photius of Constantinople

St. Ignatius patriarch of Constantinople died October 23, 877, and Photius, who finally had won the favor of Emperor

²⁸ "The leaden seal, bearing the inscription *Renovatio imperii romani*, was long attributed to Charlemagne. Unquestionably it should be attributed to Charles the Bald." Lavissee, *Hist. de France*, II, 388.

Basil by flattering his vanity,²⁹ again took possession of the patriarchal see. The Eastern episcopacy was half won over. Cleverly Photius declared that he gave up all doctrinal opposition, confining himself solely to contesting what the popes themselves, he said, had accepted only with difficulty, the unlawful insertion of the *Filioque* in the symbol. Was the Pope deceived by Photius? Did he act knowingly and with a view to the successful outcome of his plans relative to the Bulgar Church?

John VIII declared his willingness to accept the state of affairs that had been brought about, on condition that the new Patriarch, after asking pardon for his past errors,³⁰ should promise not to interfere in the organization of the Church of Bulgaria. Very likely the penetrating mind of John VIII had seen the depth of Photius' soul. Only one thing seemed utterly objectionable to that man: to recant in the face of an injunction, in a word, to humble himself. But, of his own accord, he declined to enter into any doctrinal dispute; as to the attempt to interfere in the Bulgarian Church, that had been the work of his rival Ignatius, and not his. His self-conceit allowed him to grant the demands of the Pope. Shortly afterward, the two legates, commissioned by the Pope to handle this matter in Constantinople, informed the Pontiff that the two conditions were carried out. John VIII profited by this to attach to Rome the whole hierarchy of the Bulgarian clergy. It was an important success, for which he expressed his thanks to Emperor Basil. But the result was not lasting. We know that later on, the Church of Bulgaria, fascinated by Byzantium, abandoned the Roman Church, thus preparing itself for the schism against which John VIII had wished to preserve it.

Although Photius, as he agreed, refrained from any discus-

²⁹ Photius had sent the Emperor a scholarly work of genealogy, in which the Emperor is made a descendant of Tiridates, first king of Armenia.

³⁰ *Misericordiam quaerendo*. Letter of John VIII to the clergy of Constantinople; *PL*, CXXVI, 866.

sion of the Trinitarian doctrines, he did not make the submission required by the Pope. At any rate, John was not satisfied with a vague profession of humility made at a synod assembled by Photius in 879. Furthermore, at that synod the Patriarch, by the reading of falsified letters of John VIII,³¹ obtained the condemnation of the Eighth Ecumenical Council.³² A little while later, on March 13, 880, the bishops of the East, presided over by Photius, declared that they rejected the addition of the *Filioque* and proclaimed the principle of the primacy of Byzantium over Rome.³³

This was overt schism. John VIII, informed of everything by the able and courageous Bishop Marino, whom he had sent to Constantinople for that very purpose, disavowed and condemned his papal legates, who had dared to take part in such deliberations and such declarations. Once again the projects of the Pope's wise and prudent policy failed miserably.

That policy has sometimes been charged with weakness. Says Hefele:

But we should not fail to note that John VIII, as he himself declared, thought his duty was to yield to the circumstances. The existence of the States of the Church was threatened by the attacks of the Christian princes and at the same time by the Saracens. He may well have hoped that a schism would be avoided, that Bulgaria would be won back, and that help would be obtained for the defense of his States. True, his condescension had pitiful consequences; but these could hardly have been foreseen.³⁴

Empress Engelberga

The aged Empress Engelberga, widow of Louis II, displeased with the act by which John VIII made Charles the Bald emperor, continually plotted. Having obtained from the

³¹ Hefele, VI, 39.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Pope a few days of audience in Provence, she almost persuaded the aged Pontiff to place a crown on the head of her son-in-law Boso and on that of her daughter Irmengarde, who longed to be empress.³⁵ At Rome she favored the party of those who were called Formosians. It was a strange party with the very austere Bishop of Porto at its center, a party of men the most vicious, of perjurers and assassins, like George of Aventino, and a considerable portion of the upper aristocracy, both lay and ecclesiastical, among whom you might see the patrician noblewoman Constantina, daughter of the nomenclator³⁶ Gregory, Sergius the master of the militia, and Stephen the *secundicerius* of the Roman Church. John VIII took a bold and courageous step. Excommunication and banishment scattered the group, and famous letters denounced to the Christian nations the abominable crimes that were committed in that circle of factious men.³⁷ A day would come, after John VIII's death, when they would return to favor and would make use of their standing with Martin I to tear up the papal registers containing the traces of their crimes. If copies of those letters had not come to us from other sources, by way of those to whom they were addressed, we would not have dared believe that the Holy See was assailed by such a flood of corruption and wickedness.

When he turned to the nobility of the Italian provinces, the old Pope found scarcely any greater consolation. For defense against Saracen incursions, Italy could count only on herself. Charles the Bald had been succeeded by the weak Louis the Stammerer. In 879, John VIII resigned himself to recognize as king the incapable Charles the Fat. The Pope tried to form with the dukes of Benevento, Salerno, Capua, Naples, and Amalfi a league against the common enemy. But instead of

³⁵ *Annales Bertiniani*, year 879.

³⁶ The nomenclator of the papal court was a sort of master of ceremonies. Du Cange, *Glossarium*, under the word *nomenclator*.

³⁷ *PL*, CXXVI, 675-679; Jaffé, 3041.

support, he often met with defection and treason. Duke Lambert of Spoleto and Adalbert of Tuscany openly declared themselves the enemies of the Pope. The prince-bishop of Naples, Athanasius, who made an alliance with the Mussulmans, had to be excommunicated. Overwhelmed by age and infirmities, John VIII multiplied himself wherever Italy was in peril. More than once in the early days of his pontificate he took command of a fleet and directed the attack against the Saracens.³⁸ But now he merely completed the fortifications of Rome. The enclosure which he fortified, he called after his own name, Johannipolis. But on all sides he saw only wretchedness, unfaithfulness, disaster. His supreme humiliation was his acceptance (February, 881) of King Charles the Fat as emperor. On December 15, 882, after a life of effort and sacrifice, that were almost never crowned with success, he breathed forth his soul to God, the victim of a horrible attack. As we are told by the *Annals* of Fulda, "some conspirators, among whom were his close relatives, coveting his money and his position, had poison administered to him. Then, as the poison was not acting fast enough to suit them, they beat him with a hammer until he expired."³⁹

In a letter addressed at the outset of his pontificate to Empress Engelberga, John VIII wrote these words: "When the supreme Judge comes, He will ask both of us whether we have left His Church in a better state than the state in which we received it, freer, more tranquil, more prosperous."⁴⁰ In the sad times in which Providence placed him, could he possibly hope to give a better testimony to himself before God? John VIII could truly render such an account when he appeared before the supreme Judge.

³⁸ For example, in February, 875. Jaffé, 3008.

³⁹ *Annales Fuldenses*, year 883; *Hist. des Gaules*, VIII, 47 f.

⁴⁰ Jaffé, 3028.

Pope Marino I (882-884)

After the death of John VIII, three popes followed in nine years, from 882 to 891. They had not time, perhaps also they had not the courage or the power, for any great undertakings. We see all of them start out with acts of firmness; but you would say that soon, weighed down by the pressure of frightful burdens and thwarted by formidable oppositions, they grew weary and yielded. Marino I, elected December 23, 882, was that clear-sighted and courageous prelate who at Constantinople had exposed and denounced the knavery of Photius. It was said his election was by way of compensation for the outrages he suffered on that occasion. He had been a disciple of the great Pope St. Nicholas, and was consecrated bishop of Caere by John VIII. His election was the first instance of the transfer of a bishop to the see of Rome. His letters show him in close relations with the great king of England, Alfred, whom he encouraged in the work of Christian civilization. He repeated his predecessor's condemnation of Photius. Is it true that he became convinced that the condemnation of the usurping patriarch would result in the rehabilitation of Photius' most earnest adversary, Formosus? Or was he simply seduced by Formosus' renown for austere virtue? Or did he yield to a change in public opinion? Formosus was freed from his censures and re-established in his bishopric. When Marino I died (February 24, 884), the party of the Formosians was triumphant.

Pope Adrian III (884-885)

Adrian III, a Roman by birth, was elected March 1 of the same year. He was not devoid of energy. He it was who ordered the eyes of a conspirator (George of Aventino) to be

put out, and one of his accomplices to be publicly flogged.⁴¹ But it was also in his pontificate that Photius wrote a very clever and scholarly memorial against the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Ghost,⁴² and that Emperor Basil in a letter, written probably under Photius' dictation, protested against the so-called violation of the laws of the Church in the election of Pope Marino, irregularly transferred, said Basil, from one bishopric to another.

Pope Stephen V (885-891)

Stephen V, belonging to a noble Roman family, elected six days after his predecessor's death (July 15, 885), was consecrated bishop by Formosus himself, whose influence was increasing. Pope Stephen, by his negotiations, persuaded Emperor Leo the Wise, who had just succeeded Basil, to expel Photius from the see of Constantinople. But Stephen, who reluctantly crowned Duke Guy of Spoleto emperor in 891, thus opened an era of new tribulations for the papacy. He died in August or September, 891, just when Photius was dying in the Armenian monastery of Bordi, after five years of silent retreat that we would like to believe were five years of repentance.

The house of Spoleto, which attained to the imperial dignity at the end of the ninth century, boasted that it was the equal of the Carolingian family in the nobility and the antiquity of its origin. The head of the family, Guy, a man of notoriously testy temper, had married the famous Agiltrude, daughter of Adalgis of Benevento who boasted that he had slapped Emperor Louis II. Preponderant in Italy and allied to the houses of Tuscany and Benevento, the house of Spoleto, at the death of Charles the Fat in 888, proposed its candidate for the throne

⁴¹ *Lib. pont.*, II, 225.

⁴² *PL*, CII, 280 ff., 564 ff., 793 ff.

of France. Guy, strengthened by certain alliances in that country, even succeeded in being crowned at Langres. But Odo count of Paris, who inaugurated the line of the Capetians, supplanted him. Guy, urged on by his wife the ambitious Agiltrude, at the same time plotted to become emperor. But Queen Ermengarde of Provence, daughter of Louis II, ever haunted by the memory of imperial splendors, also wanted that honor for her son. Her most formidable rival was a natural son of Carloman, Arnulf duke of Carinthia, a valiant warrior about whom gathered almost all the nobility of France and Germany and in whom were placed the hopes of all those who, in Rome, had a real care for the true interests of the Church. Arnulf seemed the only person capable of holding the great sword of his ancestor Charlemagne, of halting the Norman and Saracen invasions, and of protecting the papacy without oppressing it. The house of Spoleto, on the contrary, located in the center of Italy close to the States of the Church, involved in all the factional strifes that agitated the peninsula, and inspired by the insatiable ambition of the haughty and implacable Agiltrude, would bring nothing but humiliation and disturbance to the Church.

Pope Formosus (891-896)

This was grasped by the new Pope, who succeeded Stephen V (September 21, 891); it was Formosus. Probably there was not at Rome a man of more worth, of more extended culture, and of more ascetic bearing. He was elected almost unanimously. The good acclaimed him for his virtues, the others for his revolutionary past and for his dubious compromises.

Councils convoked by him or at his instigation at Vienne in 892, at Rome on March 1, 893, at Chalon-sur-Saône on May 1, 894, at Tribur in 895, show that the new Pope had an enlightened concern about the evils afflicting the Church and a

sincere resolve to cure them. The question considered at the Council of Vienne, held at Formosus' order and under the presidency of his legates, was the intrusion of the laity into the affairs of the Church. They usurped ecclesiastical property (canon 1), mistreated clerics (canon 2), took advantage of the death or sickness of a bishop or priest to seize the funds intended for the poor (canon 30), and exacted a payment for the conferring of ecclesiastical offices (canon 4).⁴³ The acts of the Council of Rome are lost; but Flodoard's summary shows that it was aimed at curing the evils from which the Churches of the East and of Africa suffered.⁴⁴ The council that was held in the imperial palace at Tribur not far from Mainz in 895, acquaints us with the customs of the time by the numerous allusions we find to blows and wounds (canons 20, 24, and others), to sacrilegious thefts (canon 7), to the murder of priests (canon 5), to armed invasions of churches (canon 6), in short, by the scenes of pillage and of murder that it evokes. Canon 18 forbids the use of wooden chalices in the celebration of mass. It says that we should not misunderstand the words of St. Boniface the martyr, that "formerly priests of gold used chalices of wood, and now priests of wood use chalices of gold": the honor due to holy Church and to the body of Jesus Christ makes it a duty for us to choose the most precious metals for our sacred vessels.⁴⁵ Formosus' letters, several of which are preserved, indicate a peaceful and conservative policy. He called upon Odo count of Paris not to attack Charles the Simple, the lawful king, and wrote to the bishops of France to the same end.⁴⁶

His superior intelligence showed him that the safety of the Church and of society would be served best by the crowning of Arnulf; but his former dealings made him a sort of pris-

⁴³ Mansi, XVIII, 122; Hefele, VI, 126.

⁴⁴ Mansi, XVIII, 126; Flodoard, *Historia Remensis*, IV, 2; *PL*, CXXXV, 267.

⁴⁵ Mansi, XVIII, 129 ff.

⁴⁶ Mansi, XVIII, 108 f.

oner of the Italian faction. Through weakness he crowned as emperor the duke of Spoleto, Lambert, the son of Guy; then, perhaps upon the advice of those around him, he made the culpable blunder of trying to repair that weakness by a double-faced policy, asking Arnulf to come and free him from the "wicked Christians" who surrounded him.⁴⁷ The fearless King of Germany answered the appeal and marched upon Rome at the head of an army. Guy's widow, the mother of Emperor Lambert, had seized the government of Rome. Except for a chance incident that opened the St. Pancratius gate to the German army, a bloody encounter would have taken place between the King of Germany and the empress mother of the house of Spoleto. Arnulf, received by Pope Formosus on the steps of St. Peter's, was crowned emperor on February 22, 896. The terrible Agiltrude never forgave the Pontiff for what she called his treason. Her vengeance was wreaked even upon the corpse of Formosus.

The threats of the Empress were unavailing, and the sudden death of the new Emperor Arnulf, stricken with paralysis just as he was marching upon Spoleto, may have hastened the death of the unfortunate Pontiff, who died April 4, 896.

Popes Boniface VI (896) and Stephen VI (896-897)

Says Cardinal Hergenröther: "With the death of Formosus there begins an era of deepest humiliation for the Holy See."⁴⁸ In the space of eight years (896-904) nine popes followed one another. All were more or less under the domination of the house of Spoleto, under the fatal influence of Agiltrude; and their successors withdrew from that domination only to fall under a still sadder influence, that of the house of Theophylactus and of the infamous Marozia.

⁴⁷ Jaffé, 3481, 3486, 3500, 3501.

⁴⁸ Hergenröther, *Kirchengeschichte*, II, 202.

Boniface VI, who earlier in his career had been twice deposed (first from the subdiaconate and later from the priesthood), occupied the papal throne only fifteen days. Then (May 22, 896) the influence of the Spoleto party brought about the election of the bishop of Anagni, Stephen VI. It was said that the real sympathies of the new Pope were for the Emperor of Germany, but his powerful electors gave him no freedom of action and, except for the essential interests of the Church, which Providence safeguards against every attack, he was a tool in the hands of Agiltrude. To this woman must be traced the final responsibility for the sacrilegious outrage committed by Pope Stephen VI against Pope Formosus.

The body of the former Pope was disinterred. It was clothed in its papal vestments and set up on a sort of throne. Then it was subjected to a sham trial; it was questioned, and a lawyer was assigned to answer for it. Following this lugubrious parody, Formosus was declared unlawful pope; the decrees issued by him, and the holy orders conferred by him were declared null. The three fingers which he used in giving his blessing were cut off. Lastly he was degraded, his vestments and insignia were stripped from the corpse. But they stopped at the hairshirt, which they found incrustated in his flesh.⁴⁹ The populace, so difficult to restrain once their evil passions have been aroused, wanted even more. They demanded the corpse, which they dragged to the Tiber and threw into the river.⁵⁰

Shortly afterward, Stephen VI, the victim of a conspiracy,

⁴⁹ *Corporeo siquidem suco haeserat busto, unde non tam facile discerni poterat. Vulgarius, De causa formosiana*; Dümmler, *Auxilius und Vulgarius*, p. 131.

⁵⁰ The chief sources for this event are: 1. the account by Liutprand bishop of Cremona, in his *Antapodosis* (PL, CXXXVI, 804); 2. the books composed by the Frankish priest Auxilius and by the grammarian Vulgarius (Dümmler, *Auxilius und Vulgarius*, p. 95), both of them contemporaries of the events; 3. the acts of a council held at Rome in 904, under John IX (Mabillon, *Museum italicum*, Part II, p. 86, and Mansi, XVIII, 222 ff., and other documents simply mentioned by Hefele, *Hist. des conciles*, VI, 136 f.).

was arrested, was degraded, as the dead Formosus had been, imprisoned, then strangled in his prison during the summer of 897.

Popes Romanus (897) and Theodore II (898)

So many outrages seem to have produced a slight reaction and brought to power (September 17, 897) Pope Romanus, who quashed all that Stephen had done against Formosus, but was obliged to recognize Lambert as emperor. He died at the end of four months (February 8, 898). His successor, Theodore II, governed only twenty days. Flodoard praises his piety and courage. During his short pontificate, it is said that the ghost of Formosus appeared to a monk in a dream and informed him of the place where Formosus' body would be found. The body of the unfortunate Pontiff, which had been carried over the banks by an overflow of the river, was triumphantly deposited in St. Peter's Basilica. On that day of solemn rehabilitation, the Roman populace was as enthusiastic as it had been ferocious on the day of the degradation. In the papal basilica, which had been richly adorned by the wise zeal of Pope Formosus, many declared that, at the moment when his body entered in triumph, the holy images, placed there by his care, bowed their heads in greeting as his body passed.

Pope John IX (898-900)

Eight days after the death of Theodore II (March 12, 898), John IX, formerly a Benedictine monk, was elected. He had been ordained priest by Formosus. In various councils he rehabilitated the memory of that Pope and, to avoid the disturbances that often arose at the consecration of the supreme pontiffs, decided that the ceremony would take place only in the presence of the imperial legates. But the young

Emperor Lambert, on whom John IX was counting, died soon after from a hunting accident. The papal elections were exposed to the most excited competition and the most humiliating passions that history has had to record.

Benedict IV who was set over the government of the Church from 900 to 903, Leo V who, a month after his election, was supplanted by Christopher and imprisoned by him, and Christopher who, six months later, received the same treatment from Sergius III, have left but little trace in history. The first two had real personal qualities, but their efforts were fruitless.

Pope Sergius III (904-911)

At the advent of Sergius III (June 9, 904) began a period of about sixty years, summed up by a monk of Monte Soracte in a barbarously worded Latin phrase, which was perhaps a current popular saying: *Subjugatus est Romam potestative in manu feminae*.⁵¹ For almost sixty years a woman's utterly shameless passions weighed heavily upon the Eternal City and ruled it. Says Cardinal Bellarmine: "Perhaps God wished to show that the Roman pontificate owes its conservation not to human direction nor to human prudence, and that the stone on which it rests is so provided with the special protection of God that the powers of hell will never prevail against it."⁵²

Amid the disorder of political institutions and the failure of the constituted powers, we see taking place at Rome the spectacle which is to be noted nearly everywhere else: local families emerged, acquired influence, and seized the power. But, whereas north of the Alps the valiant Robert the Strong saved the monarchy and remade France, in Italy the intrigues of

⁵¹ Benedict of St. Andrew, *Chronicon*; *MGH, Scriptores*, III, 714. This curious Latin may be literally translated as follows: "One was under the yoke at Rome, despotically, under the hand of a woman."

⁵² Bellarmine, *De romano pontifice*, preface.

the house of Theophylactus would have forever destroyed the papacy, if the papacy could have been destroyed.

Under Pope Formosus one of the most important posts in the papal court, that of *vestararius* (master of the wardrobe), was given to a certain Theophylactus, already duke and commander of the militia. The master of the wardrobe was charged with watching over the government of Ravenna and of the neighboring provinces. For this reason, if for no other, Theophylactus was a considerable personage in Rome. But this did not satisfy the ambition of his wife Theodora and of his two daughters Theodora the Younger and Marozia. First, Theodora obtained for herself the position of mistress of the wardrobe, which enabled her to interfere directly in Roman affairs. Being of easy morals, she then made her passions serve her ambitious projects. As a price for her sinful relations with the most eminent personages, what she required was not jewels and finery, but villas and fortresses. Theophylactus soon became the richest personage in the city of Rome. The clever and unscrupulous Theodora profited by this to acquire a preponderant political sway. Between the party of the dukes of Spoleto, which was declining, and the German party, that was growing in strength,⁵³ her vacillating policy made her the arbiter of the situation. The papal elections were in her hands. The papacy, in spite of the miseries of the last pontificates, was still the highest power in the world. Her whole aim was to seize the papacy.

Quite possibly her intervention was manifested as early as the last years of the ninth century, notably at the time of the election of Benedict IV, who had as competitor a certain Sergius, probably the future Sergius III. The two enigmatic persons that we see pass rapidly upon the papal throne in 903, that Leo V who was not a cardinal-priest and who was

⁵³ This was the beginning of the Guelph and Ghibelline parties, which disturbed the whole Middle Ages with their strifes.

called *sacerdos forensis*, and that Christopher who, after throwing Leo into prison, was himself cast into prison by Sergius, were very probably creatures of Theodora. But her proved candidate in 904 was Sergius III. Recently discovered letters prove that, under Pope Sergius, Theophylactus and Theodora acted as almost absolute masters in the Papal States.⁵⁴

Influence of Marozia

The scandal did not stop there. Theodora, as we have noted, had a daughter, Marozia. More corrupt, more clever, and more daring than her mother, Marozia appeared as the evil genius at the beginning of the tenth century. Married in 905 or 906 to Alberic marquis of Camerino, having illicit relations with the principal lords of Rome, she increased the wealth of her family and the number of her villas and fortresses by the same means as used by her mother. She made the Castle of Sant' Angelo her home. She was called Madam Senator (*Donna Senatrix*). From some passages of Liutprand and of Flodoard and from an expression in the *Liber pontificalis* in the statement about John XI, it has been inferred that she corrupted even Sergius III. This is the first pope on whom so grave a charge has rested.⁵⁵ Intellectually the new Pontiff,

⁵⁴ *Neues Archiv.*, IX, 517.

⁵⁵ That Pope John XI was the son of Marozia seems evident from the testimony of a large number of contemporary writers (Liutprand, Flodoard, and others) and is generally admitted by historians. Cf. Hergenröther, Hefele, Moehler, and Rohrbacher. But Liutprand and the *Liber pontificalis* declare further that his father was Pope Sergius: *Johannes, natione romanus*, says the official note, *ex patre Sergio, papa, sedit annos IV, menses X* (*Liber pont.*, II, 243).

If we admit this paternity, may we attribute it to a lawful marriage? No. John XI was elected pope in 932, according to the *Liber pontificalis*; but, according to all the historians, he was very young when he was raised to the papacy. Generally he is spoken of as a youth from twenty to twenty-six years old during this period (Hefele, VI, 150). Hence he was born in 906 or 907. But, in 907, Marozia was already married to Alberic. Most historians assign the year 905 as the date of Marozia's marriage to Alberic. Even if we suppose that she was not yet married to Alberic, how could

sprung from the counts of Tusculum, was remarkably endowed. Consecrated on June 9, 904, he governed the Church for seven years and three months. He repaired the Lateran Basilica, adorning it with much magnificence and excellent taste. This Pontiff, of whom Cardinal Bellarmine says: "He sinned by very bad example, but not by false doctrine,"⁵⁶ defended the purity of the faith against the errors of Photius,⁵⁷ the integrity of morality against Bishop William of Turin, and the holiness of the ecclesiastical state by fostering community life among the clergy. The greatest event of his pontificate was unquestionably the founding of the monastery of Cluny. September 11, 910, William the Pious duke of Aquitaine, son of Bernard count of Auvergne and son-in-law of Boso king of Provence, signed the following charter, which history should piously record:

Desiring to employ for the good of my soul the wealth which God has given me, I believe I cannot do better than to win the friendship of His poor. That this work may be perpetual, I have decided to support a community of monks at my expense. Therefore, out of love for God

Pope Sergius, her husband, have allowed her union with the Marquis of Camerino? How would he have had with Alberic those friendly relations which everyone affirms?

If culpable relations existed between Sergius and Marozia, would they have constituted sacrilege? They certainly would have. From the book of one of the defenders of Formosus, the priest Auxilius, a contemporary of Sergius III (*Hist. litt.*, VI, 122 ff.), it is evident that Sergius was raised to the subdiaconate by Pope Marino (882-884), to the diaconate under Stephen V (885-891), to the episcopate by Formosus (891-896). His name figures in a Roman council in the year 898 (*Lib. pont.*, II, 568). To free him from sacrilege, we would have to place John XI's birth as early as 885 or even 884, because subdeacons were bound to celibacy in the West ever since the fifth century (Vacandard, *Études de critique et d'histoire*, 2d ed., pp. 104 f.). This calculation would make him fifty years old at the time of his elevation to the papacy and would thus contradict the authors who speak of the youth of John XI. Moreover it is hardly probable that Marozia gave birth to a son in 884. We know that her third marriage took place in 932. To suppose that she was the mother of John in 884 would be to attribute to her an unlikely age at the time of her third marriage.

⁵⁶ *De romano pontifice*, Bk. IV, chap. 12.

⁵⁷ Council of Trosly (near Soissons), canon 14; Mansi, XVIII, 304.

and for our Lord Jesus Christ, I give to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, of my own estate, the land of Cluny and its dependencies; the whole situated in the county of Macon. I give it for the soul of my lord King Odo, and for the souls of my parents and my servants.

These monks and all this property will be under the authority of Abbot Berno, so long as he lives; but after his decease the religious will have the right to elect for abbot, according to the Rule of St. Benedict, whomever they choose, without any power hindering the regular election.

From that day they will be subject neither to us nor to our relatives nor to the king nor to any earthly power. Secular princes, counts, bishops, even the pope, I beg them all in the name of God and of the saints and of judgment day, not to lay hands on the property of these servants of God, not to sell it, exchange it, lessen it, or give it in fief to anyone, and not to impose on them a superior against their will.⁵⁸

It was from this monastery of Cluny, founded under Sergius III, that the reform of the Church arose.⁵⁹

Sergius' two immediate successors, Anastasius III and Lando, were only passing figures. They appear to have been creatures of the house of Theophylactus, who governed the temporalities in their name. No grave charge has been brought against their private life.

Pope John X (914-928)

Lando's successor, John X, formerly archbishop of his native city, Ravenna, was elected March 24, 914. He occupied the Holy See fourteen years, and not without some splendor. The romantic details which Liutprand gives about the passion he is supposed to have aroused in Theodora are purely imaginative. The scholarly editor of the *Liber pontificalis* points

⁵⁸ Mabillon, *Acta sanctorum O.S.B.*, V, 77.

⁵⁹ Chénon, "L'ordre de Cluny et la réforme de l'Eglise" in *La France chrétienne*, pp. 187 ff.

out their anachronisms and improbabilities.⁶⁰ What seems certain, however, is that he owed his elevation to the all-powerful influence of Theodora or of Marozia. But he was an active, energetic pope. His great work was the expulsion of the Saracens. He was able to form a confederation against them, made up of the nobles of the peninsula under the direction of Berengarius, the former foe of the house of Spoleto, whom he crowned emperor in December, 915. And he himself paid with his person, charging the enemy at the head of his troops.⁶¹

This independent way of acting on the part of the Pope embroiled him with Marozia. She had lost her father Theophylactus and her husband Alberic and married Marquis Guy of Tuscany. She made use of him to avenge herself upon the Pontiff. Aided by her husband, Marozia provoked an uprising and had the Lateran Palace broken into. The Pope's brother was assassinated; John X was seized and thrown into prison, where shortly after (928) he was smothered by having a pillow pressed tightly over his mouth.⁶² No one could, with impunity, withdraw from the protection of Marozia.

The arrogant ruler of Rome promptly disposed of the tiara in favor of Leo VI, who reigned six months and fifteen days (928), then Stephen VII, who occupied the Holy See for two years, one month, and fifteen days (929-931), then in favor of her own son, who was John XI.

This was the height of Marozia's power. Mother of the reigning Pope, she dreamed of becoming queen and empress. Again widowed by the death of Guy of Tuscany, she married (932) Hugh of Provence, one of the claimants for the Empire. Would her son refuse to place an imperial crown upon the brow of her to whom he owed everything?

⁶⁰ *Lib. pont.*, II, 240 f.

⁶¹ Jaffé, 3556.

⁶² Flodoard, noting the tragic end of John X, relates various rumors about it. He says that, according to some reports, the Pope died of fright; and according to others, he met a violent death. *PL*, CXXXV, 439 f.

Providence did not permit the realization of this supreme ambition. The solemn nuptials of the newly married couple, celebrated in the hall of the Castle of Sant' Angelo, took place but a short time before the catastrophe which hurled Marozia from the pinnacle of her might. A vulgar family scene was the occasion of that fall. The daughter of Theophylactus had a second son, Alberic. One day he was publicly insulted by his stepfather and, gathering some followers about him, he led an attack upon the Castle of Sant' Angelo. Hugh had time to escape through a window by a rope ladder, abandoning Marozia, who was made prisoner by her son and shortly afterward died without it being known precisely what were the circumstances of her death.

Dictatorship of Alberic

The trials of the papacy did not end with the removal of Marozia. Alberic exercised a dictatorial power, first over his own brother John XI, then, after John's death (936), over Leo VII (936-939), Stephen VIII (939-942), Marino II (942-946), and Agapetus II (946-955). None of these popes was a temporal ruler, unless, as has been said, in the way in which the last Merovingians were kings. Alberic gave himself the title of "prince of all the Romans" and had his name placed beside that of the reigning pope on all the coins of the period. The four popes who owed their consecration to him were men whose private lives were as blameless as was their doctrine.

In the year 956 we see Alberic begin a firmly conservative policy. He remained a dictator; he kept all the ways and methods of a dictator; but he used his authority to carry out many useful reforms. Says Cardinal Hergenröther: "Alberic's dictatorship was generally well liked. He respected the freedom of ecclesiastical elections. He honored the clergy, endowed several monasteries, and was much concerned with their re-

form.”⁶³ What happening was able thus to modify the policy of Marozia’s son? The coming of a saint to Rome.

Cluny Abbey

In 936 Alberic patrician of the Romans and King Hugh of Provence, both of them hoping to acquire the imperial power or at least a preponderant position in the Christian world, had resolved to submit their differences to arbitration. Cluny Abbey, recently founded under Sergius III by William of Aquitaine, was beginning to spread about it a fragrance of virtue and piety. The lords of the neighborhood offered it their lands; warriors came there to lay down their swords and follow a life of retreat and silence. There, among those souls, who were masters of their passions, raised above all the paltry considerations of earth, Alberic and Hugh thought to find the impartial arbiter they needed. As head of the abbey, the pious Berno had been followed by one whom the Church would place on her altars under the name of St. Odo. Born in the Maine country in 879, at first a brilliant officer under the command of Foulques the Good, count of Anjou, then of William the Pious, duke of Aquitaine, Odo gave up the career of arms and joined the canons regular of St. Martin of Tours. There one day, as he was reading Virgil, he was touched by grace. From that moment the reading of the Latin poet, that he had been passionately fond of, seemed to him insipid in comparison with meditation upon the Rule of St. Benedict, in which he thereafter took his chief delight. He entered Cluny monastery. There his virtues and learning marked him for the choice of his brethren, who in 927, just when Marozia’s power was most impudently spreading itself over the Church, elected him their abbot.

To him the King of Provence and the Patrician of the Ro-

⁶³ *Kirchengeschichte*, II, 206.

mans turned to end their dispute. Odo came to Rome in 936; he came again in 938 and 942. He not only brought about peace between the two rulers, but also won the confidence of Alberic, who frequently was influenced by the advice of the saintly abbot. The death of St. Odo of Cluny in 942 was a great loss for the Church, a great loss for the "Prince of the Romans." The presence and the counsel of the holy abbot would undoubtedly, a few years later, have kept him from the regrettable act that was the great fault of his life. Blinded by paternal affection, Alberic persuaded the kindly Pope Agapetus II that the surest way to avoid disturbances when the question of succession to the Holy See should arise, would be to have the future Roman pontiff acclaimed by the people even then. And for this high office he designated his young son Octavian. Gathered in St. Peter's Basilica, the clergy and the people swore to elect for pontiff, upon the death of the reigning Pope, the son of Alberic. Nothing was more contrary to canon law; no choice was more disastrous.

Pope John XII (955-963)

When Alberic died (924), Octavian was proclaimed prince and senator of all the Romans. The next year, after the death of Pope Agapetus, he was acclaimed bishop of Rome and head of the universal Church. He was a young man, only sixteen years old. Nothing in his life marked him for this office, and everything should have kept him from it. He was rarely seen in church. His days and nights were spent in the company of young men and of disreputable women, in the pleasures of the table and of amusements and of the hunt, or in even more sinful sensual enjoyments. It is related that sometimes, in the midst of dissolute revelry, the prince had been seen to drink to the health of the devil. Raised to the papal office, Octavian changed his name and took the name of John XII. He was the

first pope thus to assume a new name. But his new dignity brought about no change in his morals, and merely added the guilt of sacrilege.⁶⁴ Divine providence, watching over the Church, miraculously preserved the deposit of faith, of which this young voluptuary was the guardian. This Pope's life was a monstrous scandal, but his bullarium is faultless. We cannot sufficiently admire this prodigy. There is not a heretic or a schismatic who has not endeavored to legitimate his own conduct dogmatically: Photius tried to justify his pride, Luther his sensual passions, Calvin his cold cruelty. Neither Sergius III nor John XII nor Benedict IX nor Alexander VI, supreme pontiffs, definers of the faith, certain of being heard and obeyed by the whole Church, uttered, from the height of their apostolic pulpit, a single word that could be an approval of their disorders.

At times John XII even became the defender of the threatened social order, of offended canon law, and of the religious life exposed to danger.

In 950, Berengarius II marquis of Ivrea, grandson of Emperor Berengarius who had been crowned in 901 by Pope Benedict IV, seized the kingdom of Italy and was there exercising a tyrannical domination. John XII, in reply to the wishes of the people, implored the help of the German King Otto, who came down to Italy, drove out Berengarius, and gave peace to Rome and to the peninsula. The savior of Italy was received as a new Charlemagne. On February 2, 962, Pope John XII placed the imperial crown upon him, and upon Adelaide, who seated holiness upon the imperial throne. Otto's coronation was followed by an important treaty. An authentic copy of it is still preserved in the Vatican archives. It is the celebrated *Privilegium Ottonis*. By the new pact, the Emperor guaranteed to the Sovereign Pontiff all his possessions or temporal claims; the Pope promised that his successors, be-

⁶⁴ Hefele, VI, 187 ff.; Mansi, XVIII, 465; *MGH, Scriptores*, III, 342.

fore their consecration, would renew in the presence of the reigning emperor or of his legates, "the promises made by Pope Leo." This act, dated February 13, 962, revived purely and simply the right of the ninth century. Otto's successors, even Otto himself, soon misused certain clauses of the treaty and interfered arbitrarily in the election of the popes. But, all in all, the re-establishment of the Empire was a blessing for the Church and for society. It freed the papacy from the baneful yoke of Italian feudalism.

The next year (963) the first conflict broke out. Emperor Otto, abusing his powers and avenging himself for some act of John XII, had the Pope deposed by a synod and in his place had the protoscriniarius Leo elected under the name of Leo VIII. But John succeeded in assembling a regular council, which quashed the decisions of the assembly held by Otto. Those decisions were null for two reasons: in condemning and deposing the supreme head of the Church, the pseudo-council violated the principle that the pope cannot be judged by anyone; and in electing the protoscriniarius Leo, who was not in sacred orders, it violated an ancient tradition, that the pope must be taken from the cardinalitial clergy, that is, from the clergy attached (*incardinatus*) to a church.

True, the young Pope, in defending his case, was defending his own personal interests; and these were also the interests of justice. He was considering his spiritual interests when he took sides with the monks, favored their progress and their reform, and asked them to implore the divine mercy for him. When confirming the venerable monastery of Subiaco in its property and its rights, he requested, by a special bull, that the monks of the monastery should "every day chant, for the health of his soul, a hundred Kyrie eleisons and a hundred Christe Eleisons."⁶⁵ Out of sixteen bulls or letters of John

⁶⁵ *PL*, CXXXIII, 1024. Are we to regard this as a sign of some feeling of repentance? Or was it merely a chancery formula?

XII that we still possess, nine have for their object to safeguard the rights and prerogatives of the monasteries. Therein lay the future of the Church. Under the direction of St. Majolus, who continued the traditions of St. Odo and whose work would be carried on by St. Odilo and St. Hugh, the Cluny Abbey saw priories grouping about it, affiliated itself with other abbeys, and united numerous monasteries under its jurisdiction. A new form of monastic life appeared in the Church. In place of houses individually autonomous, a federation of monasteries, under the direction of a mother-abbey and of an archabbot, a religious order properly so called was born, exempt in temporal matters from all civil powers as sovereign freehold, exempt in spiritual matters from all ecclesiastical authority except that of the pope; a considerable power which, by virtues and learning, would acquire over lords and populace, over simple clerics and over popes, a profound reforming influence.⁶⁶ The monastic institution, which the papacy, even in its decline, had always encouraged and blessed, will in turn restore the honor of the decadent papacy. Thus the Church will find in herself the regenerating power that she needs: from one of these monasteries protected by John XII, will come forth St. Gregory VII.

⁶⁶ Chénon, "L'ordre de Cluny et la réforme de l'église" in *La France chrétienne dans l'histoire*, p. 191.

APPENDIX I

The False Decretals

ACCORDING to some historians, Pope St. Nicholas, in his legislative work, made a twofold mistake: altering from top to bottom the constitution of the Church and, for the execution of his plan, relying upon a forgery, written expressly in the interest of the papacy. This view has been maintained with no more learning and brilliancy than by the famous author of the pamphlet *Rome and the Council*, which appeared in 1869 under the pseudonym of Janus. He says:

In the middle of the ninth century—about 845—arose the huge fabrication of the Isidorian decretals, which had results far beyond what its author contemplated, and gradually but surely changed the whole constitution and government of the Church. . . . About a hundred pretended decrees . . . were then fabricated in the west of Gaul, and eagerly seized upon by Pope Nicholas I at Rome, to be used as genuine documents in support of the new claims put forward by himself and his successors.¹

This is the celebrated question of the False Decretals. This term is applied to a collection of ecclesiastical laws pretending to give the conciliar decrees and the papal decretals of the first seven centuries. The Middle Ages, from the ninth century on, generally accepted this collection as genuine and attributed it to St. Isidore of Seville. However, as early as the twelfth century, Peter Comestor, Stephen of Tournai, and Godfrey of Viterbo expressed doubts about it. The apocryphal character of the collection is today proved beyond possible question. But

¹ Janus (Döllinger), *The Pope and the Council*, chap. 3, sec. 7.

we can establish: 1. that the False Decretals introduced nothing new in the matter of papal rights; 2. that the popes had nothing to do with their composition and that St. Nicholas I's only mistake, if it was one, was sometimes to use expressions taken from the new collection in defense of his traditional rights.

1. It would be easy to show that St. Nicholas and the popes of the ninth century had no need to resort to the aid of the pseudo-Isidore to establish their rights of sovereignty whether over the ecclesiastical hierarchy or, in spiritual matters, over civil society, or in the temporal domain, over the Roman Papal States. Their right to pass final judgment in all ecclesiastical cases and to be judged by no one was an immemorial tradition in the Church: the popes had affirmed it, the bishops had recognized it, and the rulers had proclaimed it. Innocent I and Leo I had claimed the right to judge major cases, following the ancient custom.² The bishop-patriarch St. Cyril of Alexandria,³ St. Avitus of Vienne,⁴ the Palmary Synod apropos of Pope Symmachus, and the episcopal assembly held at Rome under Pope Leo III, openly attested the pope's right of supreme jurisdiction. Emperors Gratian and Valentinian accepted its principle,⁵ and Charlemagne inserted in his capitularies this ancient canon: "The supreme pontiff will be judged by no one."⁶ The pope's spiritual supremacy over rulers was a right admitted by all. Charlemagne called himself "the devoted defender and the humble auxiliary of holy Church."⁷ Hincmar of Reims, who has been called the father of Gallicanism, wrote: "God has willed that Christian kings should

² Hardouin, I, 1000.

³ Mansi, IV, 1012.

⁴ *PL*, LIX, 248.

⁵ Hardouin, I, 843.

⁶ *Neque summus Praesul a quoquam judicabitur*. Labbe, I, 1555.

⁷ *Devotus sanctae Ecclesiae defensor humilisque adjutor*. Baluze, I, 475.

have need of the pontiffs for eternal life.”⁸ We have already sufficiently established the ancient origin of the right of the pope over his temporal domain, and therefore have no need to repeat the evidence here.

2. The view formerly held by Theiner and Eichorn, that the False Decretals were composed at Rome, is today universally abandoned. We must seek their origin in the Frankish Empire. Their place of origin has been fixed at Mainz, where Benedict Levita at that very time composed the *False Capitularies*, a juridical monument that was for the civil legislation what the *False Decretals* were for the ecclesiastical legislation; then in the vicinity of Reims, where it was supposed that the trials of Rothade of Soissons, of Ebbo of Reims, or of Hincmar the Younger of Laon suggested the idea. But the recent works of Paul Fournier seem to eliminate these two suppositions. Between the False Decretals and certain apocryphal documents, certainly composed at Le Mans about the middle of the ninth century, there is so close a relationship that the learned author does not hesitate to attribute them to the same forger.

Who is this forger? The name of a deacon Leobald has been mentioned. Says Moehler: “Possibly this mighty man lived unknown and in seclusion. . . . He was assuredly a man of great knowledge, perhaps the most learned of his contemporaries, a man of penetrating mind, sagacious and in a rare degree initiated in the spirit and needs of his time.”⁹ To safeguard the independence of bishops against the encroachments of the temporal power, to exempt ecclesiastical cases from the jurisdiction of the secular courts, to oppose the exorbitant rights which certain metropolitans claimed for themselves, to augment the strength and inner cohesion of the Churches, to

⁸ Hincmar, *De potestate regia et pontificia*, chap. 1.

⁹ Moehler, *Kirchengeschichte*, II, 172.

eliminate the chorepiscopi, whose vague, indetermined, and disputed jurisdiction was a source of disturbance, especially to hinder the spoliation of the bishops, for which their destitution, obtained by arbitrary procedure, was the prelude, and, as assurance of all these results, to group the whole hierarchy strongly about the pope: such was the aim pursued by the great scholar, the clear-sighted statesman who was the author of the *False Decretals*.

He did not make the materials with which he worked, but took them from authentic documents. He simply believed that reasons of state or, if we may so speak, reasons of Church, gave him a right to enhance the authority of these documents by giving them an antiquity which they did not possess. He falsely attributed them to popes of the first centuries, as people then used to refer to the first centuries the origin of such or such a monument, such or such a legend, when they wished to render the traditions of a church more venerable. Of course, although offering excuses for the barbarous customs of that period, Christian conscience cannot approve such methods.

And such methods were not necessary. Critical scholarship places the composition of the *False Decretals* at a period anterior to the pontificate of St. Nicholas. But the great Pope never needed to depend upon the new collection in maintaining his rights. Says Father de Smedt:

Never did it occur to Nicholas I to recommend the pseudo-Isidore collection or to take the least citation from it. Further, when writing to Hincmar in 863, he mentions the popes whose constitutions ought to serve as a rule for the decisions of bishops. But the most ancient in the list is St. Siricius, whose letters are perfectly authentic. And here is something still more remarkable. In a large number of letters written subsequent to the restitution of Rothade, and consequently when he must have had at hand the complete collection of the pseudo-Isidore, Nicholas I cites phrases that are found almost textually in this collection, but always attributing them to their real authors and

not to the much earlier popes under whose names the forger had published them.¹⁰ . . .

Why, you may say, be satisfied with this silence, however significant it may be, that was altogether ineffective to hinder the success of the imposture? Why not go a step farther and solemnly protest against the unfair use of the venerable names of the first popes and expose the forger to the contempt of the Christian world? This question would not be propounded by a real scholar. And it is easily answered. Nicholas I lived in the second half of the ninth century, and no man of that time could consider, in connection with a publication such as that of the False Decretals, undertaking the work which today would be considered indispensable and which would have resulted in establishing the fraud beyond doubt. It would be unfair to blame St. Nicholas and his successors for not doing what Hincmar and Gerbert did not think of doing, although they certainly possessed far greater resources and leisure for that critical work.¹¹

In a word, following Paul Fournier, we may say that the collection of pseudo-Isidore was able, among the Franks, to aid the movement of concentration about the see of Rome;¹² it was not an element utilized by Nicholas I to accelerate it, much less to justify it. The literary influence of the *False Decretals* upon Nicholas I is undeniable; but it is not proved that they exercised any influence upon his ideas. Until the eleventh century the popes, although they did not repudiate the work of pseudo-Isidore, observed extreme caution with regard to the celebrated compilation. Only from the end of the eleventh century on did that collection, spread throughout Europe, become a convenient vehicle for several of the lead-

¹⁰ However, the False Decretals supplied St. Nicholas with some expressions and metaphors which we find in his letters. Fournier cites some instances of them. *Rev. d'hist. ecclés.*, 1907, pp. 24 f.

¹¹ De Smedt, *Les Fausse Décrétales, l'épiscopat franc et la Cour de Rome*.

¹² Although the influence of the False Decretals at Rome has not been proved, their influence in the Frankish world is undeniable. The texts of the pseudo-Isidore are quoted by Hincmar of Reims, Hincmar of Laon, the councils of Kiersy, Cologne, Mainz, Metz, etc. Cf. Villien, art. "Fausses Décrétales" in the *Dict. de théologie*.

ing ideas on which was founded the work undertaken at that period by the papacy.¹³ Ferdinand Lot¹⁴ is of opinion that the *False Decretals* originated in the Reims district and that its author may have been Wulfrad, the most learned of the clergy deposed by Hincmar. Villien¹⁵ thinks "that the discussion appears limited to the province of Reims and that of Tours, and that, in favor of one of the two opinions, it is at present impossible to establish a proof that would exclude all probability for the other."

¹³ "Etude sur les Fausses Décrétales" in the *Revue d'hist. ecclésiastique*, January 15, 1907.

¹⁴ *Revue historique*, July-August, 1907.

¹⁵ Art. "Fausses Décrétales" in Vacant's *Dict. de théologie catholique*.

APPENDIX II

The Fable of Popess Joan

IN various writings of the Middle Ages, none of them earlier than the twelfth century, we find the romantic story of a young woman whom most of the writers call Joan, although others call her Agnes, Gilberta, Jutta, or Theodora. This woman, born at Mainz, is said to have gone to Athens, disguised as a man, and there to have made a brilliant course of studies and subsequently to have come to Rome, where her learning won her a chair of philosophy. Upon the death of St. Leo IV in 855, the unanimous vote of the clergy chose as pope the brilliant philosopher, or rather the clever young woman, who governed the Church for more than two years. But one day, when she was presiding at a solemn procession, to everybody's stupefaction she gave birth to a child and died immediately afterward. She was buried at the very spot of her death, at St. John Lateran, but it was decided to omit her name from the list of the popes.

Formerly some historians thought this account might be considered historic,¹ and in favor of its historicity they cited the following: 1. the authority of the Dominicans Martin of Poland and Stephen of Bourbon, who lived in the thirteenth century and who relate the event; 2. several manuscripts of the *Liber pontificalis*, which contain the story of the popess; 3. two lists of popes, that seem to be drawn up at the close of the twelfth century and contain these words: *Papissa Johanna non numeratur* ("Popess Joan is not reckoned"); 4. the exist-

¹ Only one historian of the nineteenth century, Kist, has ventured to maintain the existence of Popess Joan. Cf. Kraus, *Kirchengeschichte*, sec. 78, no. 1.

ence at Rome, at Sienna, and at Bologna of statues erected in honor of the Popess. Dietrich of Niem, papal secretary in the fifteenth century, affirms that he saw the statue which was at Rome. The pedestal bore the following inscription: Pa. P. P. P. P. P., which was translated thus: *Parce, Pater Patrum, paruit Papissa Papellum*; 5. lastly, the avowal of the popes themselves, notably, in the thirteenth century, that of Pope John, who should have called himself John XX, but who, no doubt to give place to the Popess Joan in the papal chronology, decided to call himself John XXI.

Today no serious historian any longer believes in the story of Popess Joan. But since sometimes the story is put forward against Catholics, it will be well to set forth briefly the reasons showing its falsity.

1. The first authentic traces of the account appear in the thirteenth century, or at the very earliest in the twelfth. Those who would gladly have used it as a reproach to the Roman Church—such as the Eastern emperors, so often at odds with the popes, or such as Photius, so clever in exploiting the weak sides of his opponents and so well informed about things of the West—say not a word about it. To the Latins, who reproached them for raising a woman to the office of patriarch,² they do not reply by citing the story of the popess.

2. Contemporary testimony is not only silent about the so-called popess, but proves peremptorily that in 855 Pope Benedict III followed immediately after Pope St. Leo IV. The writer of the *Annals* of St. Bertin, at that time St. Prudentius bishop of Troyes, says: "In the month of August, Pope Leo died and Benedict succeeded him."³ Lupus abbot of Ferrières wrote to Pope Benedict III that he was deputed to his predecessor Leo. Odo of Vienne relates that Benedict III became

² The romance of this female patriarch will be found in *MGH, Scriptores*, III, 481. Leo IX alludes to it in a letter to Michael Caerularius, *PL*, CXLIII, 760.

³ *Annales Bertiniani*, year 855.

pope at the death of Emperor Lothaire (d.855). Hincmar of Reims relates in 866 that messengers, sent by him to Rome to Leo IV, learned on the way of the death of the Pontiff and found Benedict installed upon their arrival.⁴ A coin represents Pope Benedict III and Emperor Lothaire; but we know that Lothaire died in 855; then, in that year, the date of Leo IV's death, Benedict was elected. Lastly, a series of letters, documents, and acts of certain date, whether of Leo IV or of Benedict III leave no room for the so-called two years' pontificate of the popess.

As to the opposing arguments, they are of little worth. Martin of Poland and Stephen of Bourbon, who lived four centuries after the pretended events and whose writings are totally lacking in critical value, cannot adduce any evidence worthy of consideration. The two lists, which are said to be of the twelfth century, are not of certain genuineness, and would prove nothing more than the existence of a legend at that time. The account in the *Liber pontificalis* would have more weight were it not evident, from the reading of the most ancient manuscript, that the passage about Popess Joan is an intercalation of the fourteenth century made upon a manuscript of the twelfth century, as appears from an examination of the characters of the two writings.⁵ As to the statues in Sienna and Bologna, if they existed, they were probably dependent upon the legend. The Roman statue, representing a pagan divinity with a little child, may have been, according to some authors, the occasion of the fable. In any event, the inscription Pa. P. P. P. P. P. should be translated: *Pap. P. P. propria pecunia posuit* (Pope P. P. put up this statue at his own expense).

The argument taken from the avowal of John XXI has little significance. If this pope shared, in the thirteenth cen-

⁴ *PL*, CXXVI, 85.

⁵ Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, II, xxvi.

tury, the error of Martin of Poland and Stephen of Bourbon, the fact would be of no consequence. Duchesne supposes that he called himself John XXI and not John XX because of the doubling of John XV, which is found twice in some catalogues.⁶ Moreover, we know that the numbering of the popes was often done in haste and without any concern for historical criticism. In the thirteenth century, for example, the successor of Nicholas III took the name of Martin IV, although he was preceded by only one pope of the name of Martin, because he misread the names of Popes Marino I and Marino II, of the ninth and tenth centuries.

The question of the origin of the fable is obscure. Some have regarded it as a satire upon John VIII (Baronius), as a malicious interpretation of a Roman statue with its inscription (Döllinger), as a myth intended to deride the acceptance by the papacy of the *False Decretals*, which may have been composed in Mainz and spread first in Greece (Blasco and Doderlein), lastly, as a simply popular fancy without any significance (Lapôtre). We are inclined to consider it as a coarse pleasantry elaborated by the people's imagination in connection with the influence of Marozia upon the papacy,⁷ without denying that the Roman statue and perhaps the story of the *False Decretals* may have furnished some secondary elements in the development of the popular story.⁸

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 457 note.

⁷ It was during this period that, according to the words of the monk of Monte Soracte, "a woman was seen imposing a despotic yoke upon Rome." Perhaps this was the first source of the popular story of Popess Joanna.

⁸ See Lapôtre, *L'Europe et le Saint-Siège*, pp. 359 f.; Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, II, 26; Döllinger, *Les fables papales au Moyen Age*.

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